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With Balls...*

Ecstatica II

Flying Corps

Rowan's WWI Blockbuster

UNREAL

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**X-Wing Vs.
TIE Fighter**

Whose Side Will You Be On?

Diablo

Devilishly Good-
Looking RPG

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EXCLUSIVE!
FIRST LOOK AT
NEED FOR
SPEED 2

MIRACULOUS!
NEW GAME OFFER!
See Page 106





Name: NITRO RACERS™ Format: PC

Style: Top down, smash 'em up racing

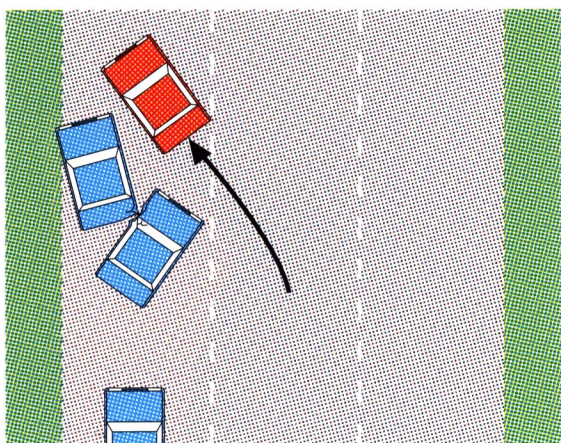
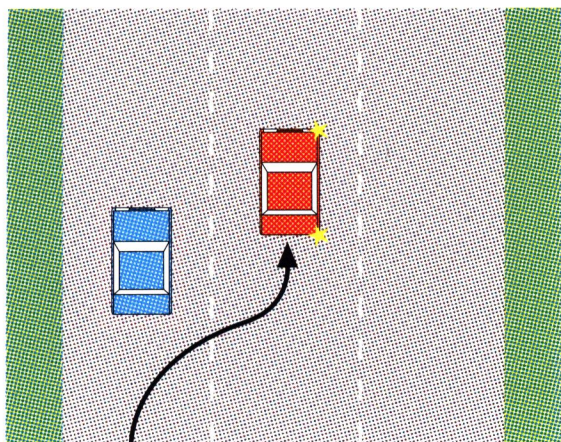
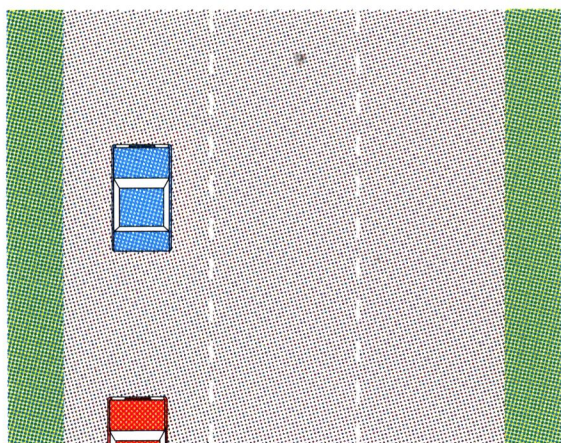
Graphics: 1200 frame animation

Features: 30 different race tracks, upgradeable cars and pit crews, octoplay

Author: Studio 3DO, <http://www.3do.com>

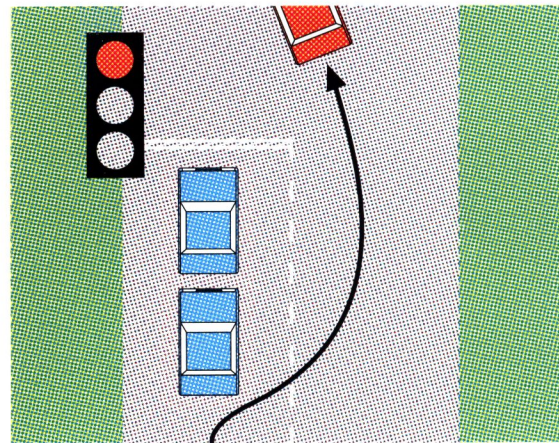
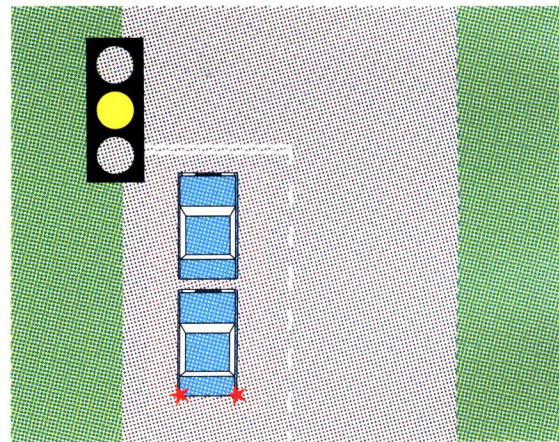
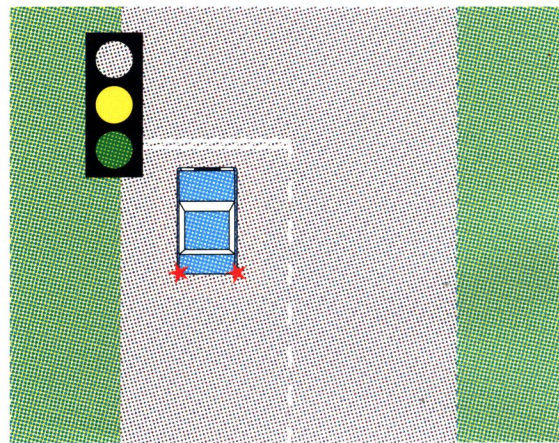
When: Now Where: Anywhere good

3.7 Overtaking



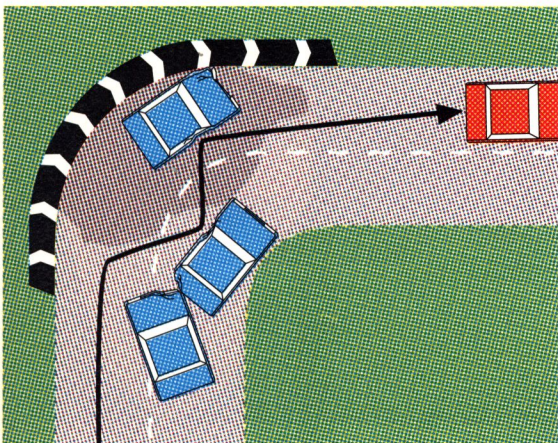
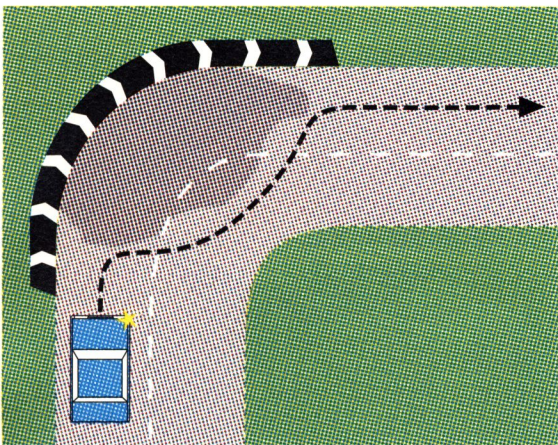
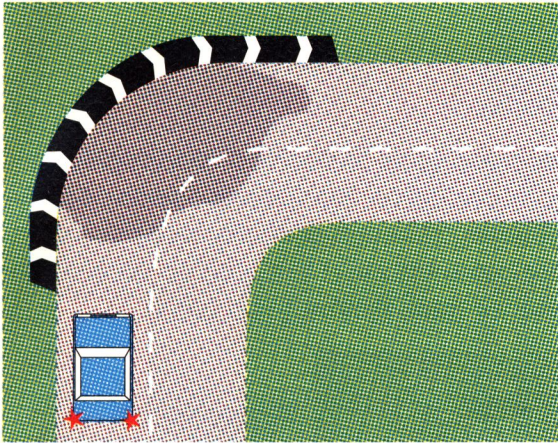
- Lane discipline is nonsense - you pay your road tax, use all the lanes.
- Do not overtake unless you can cause serious damage to other vehicles.
- Once you have started to overtake, quickly swerve back in front of the vehicle you are overtaking.
- **If in doubt - OVERTAKE**

5.2 Traffic Signals



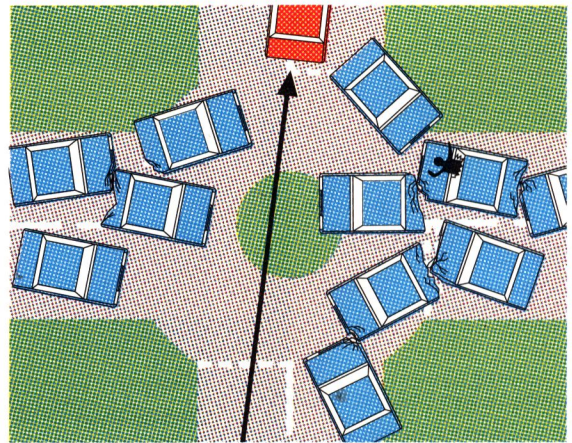
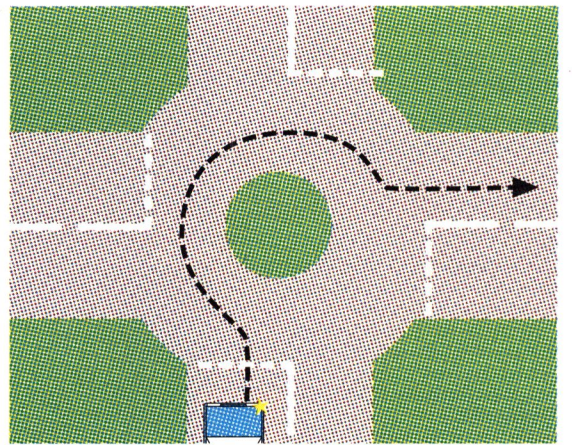
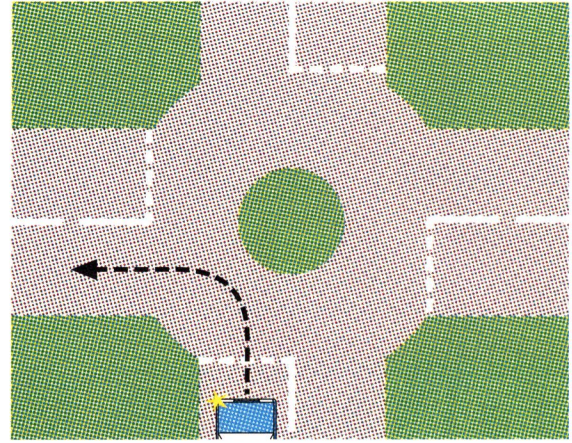
- Lights are for Christmas trees.

9.4 Hazardous Surfaces



- Ice can be dangerous, your steering may be affected.
- Should you find yourself skidding, position your vehicle in the path of oncoming vehicles.
- Use your brakes sparingly.
- **Remember - mirror - signal - manoeuvre - IMPACT**

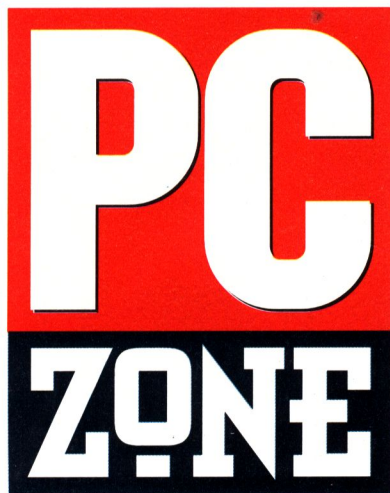
12.0 Approaching Roundabouts



- On approaching a roundabout, decide as early as possible which lane you need to take in order to create the most carnage.
- Increase speed, this is good for your adrenalin build-up.
- Show no consideration for other road users, especially those on horseback.
- Hone these skills. Prepare for Nitro Racers.™



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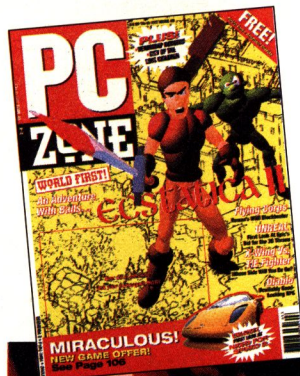
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PC games magazine: ABC 43,149

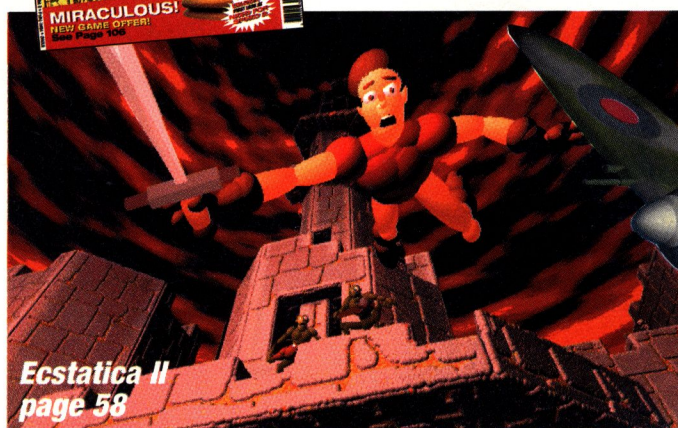


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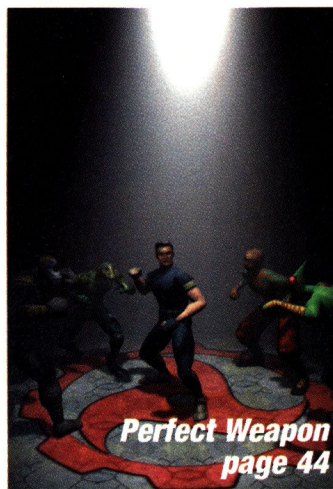
ECSTATICA II

This month's cover game exclusive is the graphically stunning *Ecstatica II* from the Andrew Spencer Studios. The original game, although generally well received, was criticised for being too short and a bit on the easy side, but this time we think they've got it just right.

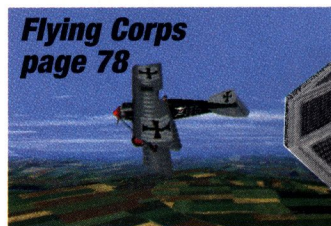


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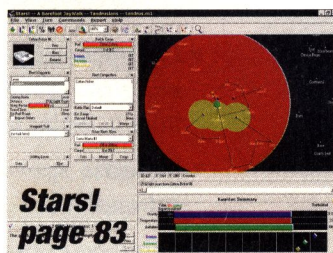
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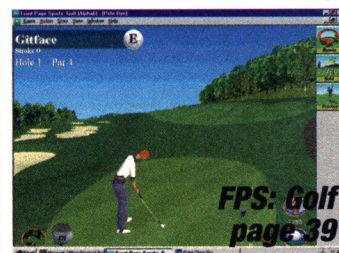
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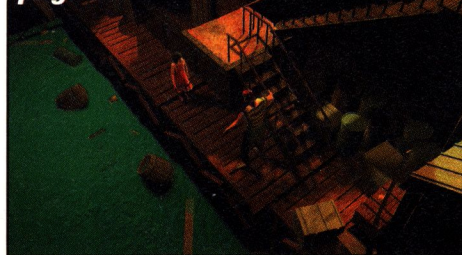
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The original 'game' came in for a lot of flack for being a vapid and largely unsatisfying experience. Have Roberta Williams and Sierra finally made amends?

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City Of The Lost Children 68

The game of the movie that looks a lot like Alone In The Dark and features a young girlie in a motion captured dress. Blimey!

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3D graphics cards are the subject of much discussion amongst PC Zone readers at the moment, despite the fact they've only recently started to appear in a significant number. We rounded them all up and admired the best and laughed at the rest in our definitive six-page guide to what's hot and what's not in the world of graphic accelerators.



COVER DISKS

CD ZONE



Help!

The CD not working? HD playing up? The PC's being a total bast? Don't worry - phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any week day between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250
Any week day between 11am and 6pm
(Please DO NOT phone the PC Zone office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either help line, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down as much relevant information as possible ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

Broken or Missing CD?

If you are unable to get your grubby paws on the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HD from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

CD Exchange (48), PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Boissier St, London W1P 7HJ

Your details (please print clearly)

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Please make cheques payable to:
DENNIS PUBLISHING Ltd.

CDs from previous issues are also available.



HD DISKS

To install this month's floppy demo go to DOS and insert disk one and type PCZONE. This will then start the installation and set-up procedure and install the game fully onto your hard drive. Just follow the on-screen instructions and away you go.

Crazy Drake (Nuerotech Software)

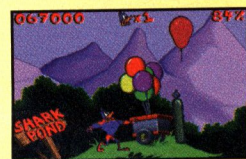
Ha, ha, ha! He's crazy, that Drake is! Bonkers! Ho, ho! He's mad! No, really, he is. When he's not busy starring in cutesy, cartoony, *Earthworm Jim*-my platform games, he can be found lurking in a run-down, dilapidated mental hospital, screaming and crying. He weeps and rolls his eyes around, tries to slit his wrists, the lot. Right now he's labouring under the delusion that he is in fact the 'Lamb of God' and has arrived upon the Earth in order to warn humankind of the coming Apocalypse. Try as he might, he just can't stop the voices in

his head - the taunting, jibber, accusatory utterances that jibber and jabber ceaselessly inside his mind. Yes, he's a 'Crazy Drake' and no mistake. Ho, ho, ho. Ho, ho - boo, hoo. Boo, hoo, hoo. Waaaaaahhh.

NB: *Crazy Drake* must be run from DOS. If you have Windows 95, you need to restart it in DOS mode. Any problems? Consult the README.TXT file.

Specs: DOS only 486DX2/66
minimum 8Mb RAM VGA

Controls:
Cursor keys Move
Ctrl Fire
Spacebar Jump



CD-ROM

This month's CD is absolutely bursting with fantastic demos, utilities. To run the CD from DOS, insert the CD into your CD-ROM drive, change to the appropriate drive (ie D:) and type PCZONE.EXE. To run the CD from Windows, insert the CD and click on BROWSER.EXE under the CD icon.

Quake Stuff! (Shareware)

Quake. It rocks. It rules. It pisses through the letterbox of every other game in town, rings the doorbell and then runs away, laughing. It's the Queen of Mean, the Lord of Gore, the Knave of Graves, the Prince of Mince, the King of... um... Thing. It's really rather good.

Which is why we've seen fit to provide you with a jaw-dropping treasure chest crammed full of *Quake*-related maps, player skins, weapon replacements and nifty plug-ins. Over 500 files await within this month's shimmering disc. Prepare to leap in head-first and totally immerse yourself in a veritable undersea kingdom of slithering entrails. Go on. Get going, now! Get stuck in! What's the matter with you, eh? Stop reading! Get moving!

Ooh! Sorry! Hold on a second! Forgot to mention something. Rather important this, so pin your lugholes back. Or your eyes, rather. Please read the following points carefully...

USING THE NEW MAPS

1) The files you're after are all .ZIP files. You'll need a program such as PKZip, or WinZip (included on our CD - aren't we lovely?) in order to open them up. Don't worry, it's easy.

2) Read the documentation for each file before you extract it. This is usually contained within a file called README.TXT. A typical entry might read thus...



Title	I_Rock!!!!
Filename	I_ROCK.BSP
Release date	November 3, 1996
Single-player	No
Co-operative	No
Deathmatch	Yes! It rocks!
Difficulty settings	Nope
Author	Bradley Insufferable Yankee Geekoid Tossit III Jnr
E-mail address	I_Rock@fascism.com
Web page	http://www.fascism.com/NewWorldOrder.html
Description	This level rocks. It rocks. It kicks ASS, man!!!!!! I rock! I rock! I rule! I kick ASS! I hate you! You suck. I hate you! You suck!

Note: Compiled with QuakeyWakey v2.1 for W95. Which ROCKS!!!!!!
Additional Credits to Aerosmith, Whitesnake, Extreme, etc.

Bear in mind that some levels (some might say the majority) are designed primarily for multi-player mode. Therefore they may not include monsters. Check before you play.

3) To install the maps, you need to find the directory named ID1 which lurks within the main *Quake* directory on your hard disk. Enter ID1 and create a new directory (folder) called MAPS. There. Now, just unzip the levels you're interested in into that directory.

4) To play your brand new levels, simply fire up *Quake* and enter the console (hit the weird, rarely-used key to the left of the number 1 on your keyboard). Then type in:

MAP XXXXX

where XXXXX is the exact name of the BSP file (you don't need to type the .BSP bit, by the way).

5) There you go! If for some reason it hasn't worked, check the README.TXT file again. Please note that new maps will *only* work with the registered version of *Quake*. So there.

USING THE PLUG-INS

1) We've said it before and we'll say it again: the files you're after are all .ZIP files. You'll need a program such as PKZip, or WinZip (included on our CD - aren't we lovely?) in order to open them up. Don't worry, it's easy.

2) Another point worth repeating: read the documentation for each file before you extract it. This is usually contained within a file called README.TXT. Some of them require complex geeky stuff to be undertaken in order to work. If in doubt, DO NOT USE these files.

3) Each plug-in contains a file named PROGS.DAT. To use them, you need to create a new folder in your *Quake* directory. Call it what you like. Let's assume for our purposes that you've named it POODLE. Simply extract the contents of the Zipfile into the POODLE directory, and then run *Quake* from MS-DOS with the following command line...

quake -game poodle

where 'poodle', obviously, refers to the name you gave the directory.

4) Bear in mind that you can't have more than one PROGS.DAT file per directory. Like, duuuuhh...

There are many different types of plug-in. Here are just a few of them:

Skins

Bored with the old familiar *Quake* multi-player characters? Why not spice things up a little with a custom-designed 'skin'? There are loads awaiting your approval on our gleaming frisbee of digital joy this month - including Judge Dredd, Boba Fett, Predator, Bones from *Star Trek*, cowboys, ninjas and Eammon Holmes.*

*Not really... sorry!

Bots

These are specially designed artificially-intelligent characters (or objects), and are dead nifty and cool and ace and that. Many are designed to help you out in single-player mode - some will attempt to kick your arse inside out in Deathmatch mode (to take one on, start a multi-player game with the 'Direct Connection' option).

Miscellaneous

There are shitloads more weird and wonderful add-ons to discover: banana skin generators, multi-player enhancements, extra gore options... you name it, someone's done it. And we've put it on the CD and handed it to you. Oh, we're so goo-ood to you! (NB: You will need the full version of *Quake* to run these utilities.)



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This month's multiple map mayhem maintains its momentum with this motherlode of murderous, mind-mangling mazes. *Duke Nukem 3D* is the game, custom-built level design is the name. There are over five hundred - yes! - *five hundred* maps to be found onboard this month. And you *know* you want to play your way through them *all*. Here's the drill:

- 
- 1) Three times, we've said this now: they're all .zip files. You'll need a program such as *PKZip*, or *WinZip* (included on our CD – aren't we lovely?) in order to open them up.
 - 2) As always, read the documentation for each file before you extract it. This is usually contained within a file called *README.TXT*. Some of them might want to overwrite your existing files. Back them up – or better yet, **DO NOT USE** these add-ons if you are not 100% sure that you can deal with any problems that may arise. After all, you wouldn't try to wrestle a crocodile if you had a broken arm, now, would you?
 - 3) Extract the files to your main *Duke Nukem 3D* directory.
 - 4) To play, run the *SETUP* program from within the *Duke* directory, then choose the relevant map



from the list. Note that you can't have hundreds of MAP files within the same directory – should you reach that ceiling, you'll need to delete old ones in order to install new ones. Don't delete your original Duke files unless you have back-ups! Okay? don't!

The full version of **Duke Nukem 3D** received an 18 rating from the BBFC and as a result, some of the levels contained on this CD might contain material of an adult nature. Please consult the README.TXT file for a detailed written explanation of the contents if easily offended, or before allowing a minor to access these levels. These levels will not run unless you have the full version of **Duke Nukem 3D** installed on your hard drive.

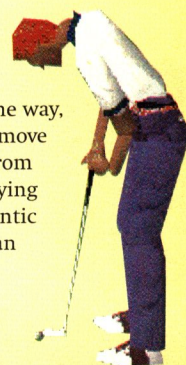
These new levels will only work with the full, registered version of *Duke Nukem 3D*. If you've only got the shareware version, you need to go outside, find a shop and buy the full product. Okay?

Sierra attempt to thwack *Links* and PGA into the rough with their innovative golf sim from the *Front Page Sports* crew.

Instead of click, click, clicking your way around the course, you actually have to use your mouse to strike the ball, which means that you can add hook or slice your shot with the merest flick of the wrist. While this gives you unprecedented control over your swing, it also makes getting the ball to go where you want to bloody hard (a bit like 'real' golf, as anyone who's ever played the 'real' game will tell you).

Anyway, there are just a couple of holes on this demo to show you how *Front Page Sports: Golf* is progressing (this demo is an early version - the full product will be available in a few months' time). By the way, you're advised to remove any hot beverages from your desk when playing *FPS: Golf* because frantic 'mouse-swinging' can cause 'accidents'.

Specs: Windows 95 only
Pentium 8Mb RAM
SoundBlaster
Controls: Mouse



THE EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING.

THE AGONY...

MAXIS

ANCO



Huygen's Disclosure (MicroForum)

Underwater hi-jinks a-go-go are the order of the day in this slice of subaquatic supremacy from Canadian developers MicroForum (also responsible for this month's rather ace *New Beat Trancemission* demo). There are rather a lot of keys, so I haven't got room for the usual mindless, offensive preamble about how it's a demo version, and how the full version is jam-packed of far more stuff, and this and that and the other. Besides, the deadline's looming, we've all been working flat out, it's late in the day and we've been drinking consolatory beers for the last few hours. You're the best mate I've ever had, you know that? I'll kill yer, yer bastaaaahhd. Bleeueughhh. Etc.

Specs: Pentium 8Mb RAM SoundBlaster
Controls: Keyboard, joystick or mouse



MOVING AROUND:

Using the mouse

Right button Walk in current direction
Shift + right button Walk backwards
Mouse movement Turn

Using the keyboard

Arrow keys All directions are relative to the player
Move forward Up
Turn left Left
Turn right Right

Move backwards Down
Strafe left <ALT> left
Strafe right <ALT> right

Numeric keypad (numLock ON). All directions are absolute (relative to scene)

Intermediate (45°) directions 1
Move towards camera 2
Intermediate (45°) directions 3
Move left 4
Move right 6
Intermediate (45°) directions 7
Move far from camera 8
Intermediate (45°) directions 9

WEAPON SYSTEM CONTROL:

Using the mouse

Left button (pressed) + movement Aim active weapon
Left button Fire active weapon

Using the keyboard

<CTRL> up, down, left, right Aim active weapon
Spacebar Fire active weapon

Weapon selection

Activates laser <F1>
Activates MDC grenades <F2>
Activates weapon 3 (if any found on Titan) <F3>

Allies Behaviour Control (if applicable)

Ctrl + 1 Toggles first ally's aggression level (Defensive/Offensive)
Ctrl + 2 Toggles second ally's aggression level (Defensive/Offensive)
Ctrl + 3 Force allies to attack player's current enemy
Ctrl + 4 Toggles allies' shooting on/off

QUEST RELATED CONTROLS:

Using the mouse

Ctrl + right button Toggle quest panel on/off
Right button (while an icon is active) Return to Walk/Battle mode

When panel is active, click on:

Talk, Think, Look, Pick up

Activate corresponding function:

Activate the options screen Opt
Activate the inventory screen I
Open/close inventory panel <—>

Using the keyboard

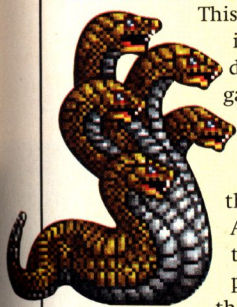
Enter Toggle quest panel on/off
A Talk
T Think
L Look
P Pick up
O Activate the options screen
I Activate the inventory screen

GENERAL CONTROLS:

Esc key Exit from inventory panel, puzzle screens, etc
Esc key Interrupts first-person view animation
Esc key Skips active 'talk' audio clip
Right mouse button Exit Quest mode and return to Walk/Battle mode

Ctrl P Toggles health and weapon status panel
Ctrl F1 Invokes Help screen
Ctrl shift 1 Enable Auto Targeting Device
Shift F1 View credits

Heroes Of Might & Magic 2 (New World Computing)



This brilliant sequel which scored so well in last month's issue of *PC Zone* is best described as a kind of *Civilization*-style game, in tights and pointy shoes. Essentially, you have to explore and conquer a fantasy world (Civ-style) with a given amount of resources and men. The more land you 'colonise' the more wealthy and powerful you become. Although the combat is a little basic when compared to the likes of *C&C: Red Alert*, the full product offers plenty of depth and gameplay and manages to strike the perfect balance between resource management and world exploration. If you can cast aside your aversions to *Dungeons & Dragons*, this playable demo should satisfy your wanderlust and may even encourage you to grow a lengthy beard.



Specs: Windows 95 only 486DX2/66 8Mb RAM SoundBlaster **Controls:** Mouse/keyboard

Pocoman (Sleepless Software)

If *Pocoman* was a noise, instead of a game, it'd be the sound 'AAAAAARRRRRRGGGGGGHHH'. It's one of those conceptually-simple-yet-ratbastard-hard-in-execution puzzle games.

At first glance, it looks just like *Boulder Dash*, the ancient-but-fab CBM 64 game, but in fact it's something altogether different. The aim is to push the treasure through the maze and onto the designated spaces. It ain't easy. You can only push one item at a time, and it's very, very easy to get stuck. Level one itself is tough enough – but it is feasible. Bear in mind that it gets progressively harder the more you persevere (rather like a dog's penis does). If you like this shareware demo, why not order the full game from the author?

Specs: Windows 3.1/95 486DX/33 4Mb RAM **Controls:** Mouse/keyboard

ESSENTIALS

A wicked new arrival to the 'Essentials' throng this time around, in the form of SciTech's *Display Doctor*. This is a 21-day trial version of a super-handly svGA diagnostic tool. Sounds dull? Well, it helps you speed yer games up a bit. Not so boring now, is it? Eh? So check it out.

The usual indispensable also get a look in: *Paint Shop Pro 4*, *McAfee Virus Scan*, etc... stick your nose in and have a bit of a shufti, innit?

New Beat Trancemission (MicroForum)

Create your own trancey tunes and dance ditties with this cut-down demo of this fantastic music-maker.

Simply install the software onto your hard drive and then select your samples to create an instant hit. The full product sports loads of extra features and sounds, but there's enough here to get your toes a-tappin'. Just use your mouse to click on the various samples and away you go. It's simple really, even that mad bloke from the Prodigy could do it. And Neil Tennant. You can even save your tunes and play them to your friends and family.

Specs: Windows 95 only Pentium 8Mb RAM SoundBlaster **Controls:** Mouse



Get Lost (Tom Bombadil's Software Imporium and House of Curiosities)

Your objective in this 3D maze game is to travel to a given point in the labyrinth. There aren't any walls, so it's easy to guess which direction to head in... or is it? Ha! No, it's bloody hard. It may look a bit crap, but give it a spin, because it's really quite good entertainment. Being shareware, you like-a da game, you pay-a da author, capisce?

Specs: 486DX2/66 4Mb RAM DOS
Controls: **Cursor keys** Move around
Esc Quit

Helicop: Letters & Numbers (Lander Software)

Er... or *Helicop: Letters and Numbers* to give it its full title. It's a pretty bizarre blend of warm-spirited 'edutainment' and relentless shoot 'em up silliness. You play a weird-looking anthropomorphic helicopter, who's on the trail of some ruthless letters and numbers. It's all fairly straightforward, and it's a darn sight more fun than you might expect, so why not give it a whirl(ybird)? The little ones will love it to death, and – heh, heh – they'll be educated (shhhh) at the same time...

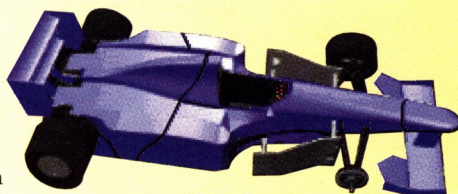
Specs: DOS VGA 486DX2/66 8Mb RAM
Controls: **Cursor keys** Move
Spacebar Fire



F1 Manager

(Europress)

Wahey! It's an F1 managerial sim. May the world stop turning on its axis for just a moment in recognition of this mighty event.



Here's the deal: within this demo you will find one car to use which has already got sponsorship on it, the car set-up and one track to race. If you move around the screen or click at the bottom for the different parts of the building, you can have a look at all the options available. If you want to move straight to the race, firstly click on the computer disk drive (that's the one in the game, not your real-life one, you're hateful *twat*, you), and then click on the month at the top of the screen (this makes it move it on one month). When this is clicked, a message reading 'the race is going to start in a few days' will appear. Click back, then move the cursor to the bottom right 'circuit'. Click on this icon then click the truck. Now select the start button. Click this and you're on the way to the first track of the season.

Remember, you'll have to set up pitstops and other things, so look around before starting the race. You horrible, horrible dunderhead. I bloody hate you.

Specs: DOS 486DX2/66 8Mb RAM SoundBlaster **Controls:** Mouse/keyboard

INTERNET UTILITIES

As ever, we've stuffed the CD so full of handy Internet-related applications, it may well split in half and cause some kind of bizarre 'reality meltdown', during which your head will turn into an onion, and your backside will start hosting GM-TV alongside Eammon Holmes. Needless to say, the pair of them will get on like a house on fire. In fact, before long, they'll be seen stepping out together. And going on holiday and stuff. Your arse. And Eammon Holmes. Honest.

Soul Trap (MicroForum)

A 3D adventure-cum-platform game thing in which you enter a nightmare world of your own imagining and leap around in an attempt to flush your mind clean of the gnawing virus we call 'insanity'. You get to shoot things too. If you've got a 3D accelerator card, then yippee! If you haven't, you'll probably wish you had. Oh, and the minimum spec - it's rather steep, so if your PC is so old it runs on coal, I think you can skip this one.

Spec: Win 95 only Pentium 90 16Mb minimum SVGA

Note: 3D accelerator recommended

Controls:

Cursor keys	Move
Mouse up/down	Look
V	Change view
Ctrl/Left mouse button	Fire
Spacebar	Jump



Carmageddon (rolling demo) (SCI)

Literally a 'rolling demo', this, as you'll soon see. It's a tantalising taster of sci's upcoming motorised carnival of carnage and killage, featuring more shattered windscreens, fractured driveshafts and slightly-scratched ashtrays than any game has a right to offer.

It's a bit like driving through Italy, really, except you're unlikely to pick up any sassy, sexy, dark-haired, Latin hitch-hikin' temptresses in this computerised simulation. Not that you would anyway, even if you were driving through Italy. In a Porsche. With money glued all over it. Because you're ugly and you smell.

(© Alienate the Reader, Inc. 1997)

Specs: 486DX/66, 8Mb, VGA



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COMING SOON ON PC CD ROM



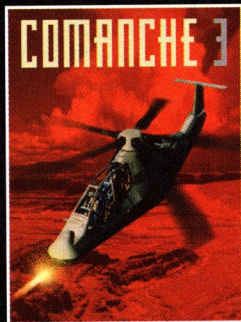
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**TIME TO GET
YOUR CHOPPER OUT.**



The Comanche[®] RAH-66™. It's a nasty piece of work. Seize the controls for yourself in Comanche[®]3, the all-new state-of-the-art combat helicopter game. Featuring an incredible 3D landscape powered by the revolutionary new Voxel Space 2™ graphics engine. Startlingly crisp digital stereo. And multiplayer capability through network,

modem or via direct connect.

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For more information please telephone NovaLogic on 0171-405 1777 or write to NovaLogic Ltd., 26-27 Boswell Street, London WC1N 3JD.

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NOVA



LOGIC

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BULLETIN

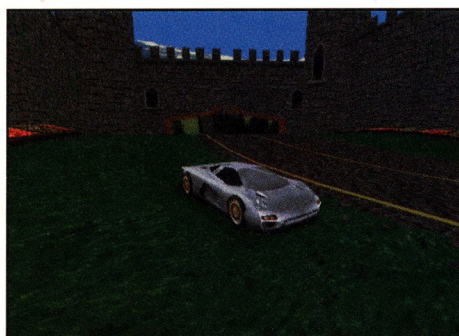
The Need for more Speed

An all-new, international line-up of 'untouchable' super-cars is revealed in Electronic Arts' potentially groundbreaking *The Need For Speed 2*.

THE LAMBORGHINI CALA, SO NEW THE INK has yet to dry on the buyer's waiting list, is just one of the seven super-cars that'll be gracing our screens when Electronic Arts unleash *The Need For Speed 2* upon the boy-racing PC driving fraternity later this year. More car manufacturer's licences may be announced as the developers continue the project, but the cars revealed so far include the McLaren F1, the Isdera Commendatore 1121, Lotus's Esprit v-8 and Elise GT, Ford's GT90 and Indigo, and the aforementioned Lamborghini Cala.

This Win 95 native racing game will carry on from where *The Need For Speed* left off and will feature a host of international courses spanning coastline, tundra, urban, forest, alpine, jungle, village, ruins, lakes, resorts, flatland, savanna, desert, fantasy and (pant!) rollercoaster (!!) environments. Authentic physics modelling will see differing car performance from track to track (how the McLaren F1 fares on the jungle course is anyone's guess...) and a 50% increase in the polygon department will also push detail levels through the roof. EA claim that *The Need For Speed 2* will be much faster than its predecessor and that this added speed will enhance the feeling of being on the open road with the car of your dreams.

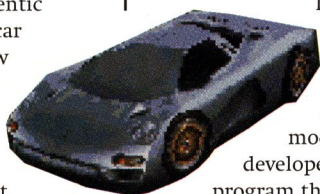
The split-screen, two-player game engine has also been totally re-vamped for *The Need For Speed 2*, and the player will even remain in-car



An increased polygon count and sophisticated light-sourcing, mean the cars in *Need For Speed* now look far more realistic.

during crashes, rather than being thrown out to an external view, as was the case previously.

Improvements over the original do not end there, though. No siree. On the presentation front, a new lighting



model has been developed for the program that introduces

distance hazing (as seen to great effect in games such as *Magic Carpet*), interactive objects react to being hit, and roadside details in the form of complex underpasses and towering buildings are flaunted with gay abandon. There'll be more scope to drive around as you see fit, four

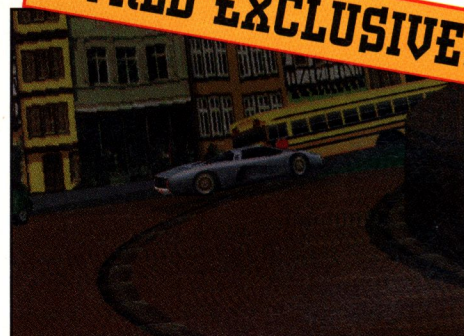


camera views, two difficulty levels, 11 opponents (there were only seven in the original) and a whole score of interactive music that changes pace depending on where you are and how well you're doing.

In short, *The Need For Speed 2* looks set to be the be-all and end-all of fantasy racing games and will no doubt become one of the biggest titles of 1997 if EA manage to squeeze an acceptable frame rate out of the finished item.

Of course, PC Zone will be first to tell you all about it, and we'll be following development of this title closely throughout the year. So strap yourself in tightly. **Z**

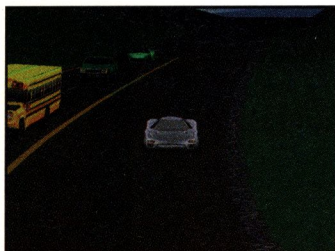
WORLD EXCLUSIVE!



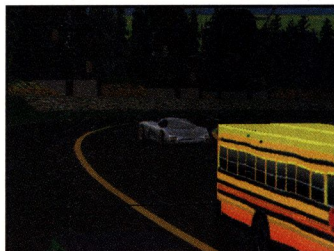
These early shots show how the game is shaping up. What you can't appreciate is how the thing moves on-screen.



The Jaguar XJ220 (in stylish black) and the Lamborghini Cala (in shocking yellow) are put through their real life paces.



Pure arcade thrills - no messin'. *TNFS2* dispenses with fiddly customisation screens in favour of in-your-face racing realism.



Like a silver bullet the car leaves the road by inches as the schoolbus is left rattling in its wake. Now this is what it's all about!



EA claim that every possible geographical scenario has been incorporated into *TNFS2*, but I never saw seabed, active volcano...

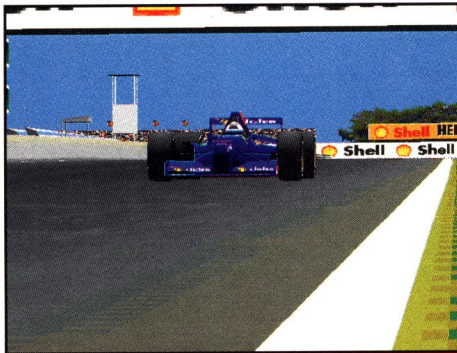
EIDOS go for pole position

French development house Lankhor and EIDOS Interactive have been driving themselves round the bend in an attempt to come up with the best Formula 1 racing sim ever to grace the PC scene.

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!



There are still shadows and stuff to add, so in the finished game the cars won't look as if they're floating inches off the floor.



A low camera angle catches all the action. EIDOS are hoping their Formula 1 game blows its competitors off the track.



In terms of track design, no detail is spared. Every bump and dip is to be recreated using official surveyors' maps.

GALLIC DEVELOPERS LANKHOR, VIRTUALLY unknown until now, are currently beaver away on a new Formula 1 racing game for EIDOS Interactive. Lankhor have incorporated a true force driving model into their game which, in their words, will enable the player to experience "a new level of simulation". Developed with the help of McLaren's own race engineers, no detail has been spared to give the best representation of a Formula 1 race car.

F1 (working title) is to be based around the 1995 FIA season using the official Fuji licence, and players will be able to participate in a whole race weekend, including qualification, or simply pick any one of the 17 courses and jump into the car for practice or just for the hell of it.

Based on official surveyors' maps, every one of the 17 world circuit courses have been modelled in minute detail, taking into account all the trackside hoo-hah, plus every bump and winnet of gravel on the tarmac itself. Well, maybe not the gravel.

Using a unique networking system, it will be possible to support up to 26 players in

Lankhor's game, if your hardware is up to it, of course. This, in itself, is an exciting prospect – imagine 26 players all at once... even though it would require



nothing less than a Herculean effort to get 26 machines and 26 players together for a 'kick about'.

On top of all that, there's a 'revolutionary' replay option, the mechanics of which are being kept so secret that we're not allowed to tell you about it. Gorsh!

All of the usual camera views are to be included, plus some new, highly original 'intelligent' cameras that, it is claimed, will show the action "in a whole new light". All the camera views will be linked together in a way that will eliminate 'flipping' (*Flipping what? – Ed.*), using fades and wipes to ensure that the action zips as smoothly as George Dawes in a Vaseline-lined water slide.

All 13 teams and their cars have been represented in the highest detail, right down to the last nut and bolt. This, combined with Gouraud shading and spectacular real-

time lighting, will ensure that at least F1 impresses visually.

How it plays? Only time will tell. It's still a way off and there's some extremely tough competition to beat on the way.

Formula 1 fans should obviously keep an eye on Lankhor's F1, especially when you consider that EIDOS are spending a huge amount of cash to ensure that it is as good as it possibly can be. We'll have a full preview for you in the very near future. **Z**



Designed with the help of McLaren's race engineers, the game's authenticity level should shoot through the roof.

Padded-Out

WIN! Joysticks and joypads of differing shapes and sizes, courtesy of Saitek and Spacetec.

THE 'STICK AND 'PADLESS AMONG YOU MAY BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT PC Zone is giving away an array of PC game controllers, including the Spacetec SpaceOrb 360 (as featured in PC Zone Issue 44), the Acemaster 18 flightstick and the Megapad XII, both from Saitek.

The SpaceOrb works with all Windows 95 games – just plug and play and you'll be 'orbing' it around such 3D classics as *Quake*, *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Doom 2* in no time. It retails at £99.99, with the Acemaster 18 and Megapad XII selling at £39.99 and £17.99 respectively.

To win one of the above prizes answer the question opposite and send the coupon to the address shown.



Q. Quake was created by which US development company?

Answer: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

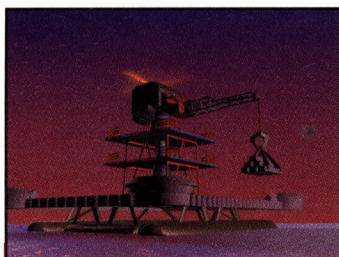
Send your entries to:

I want a pad, me, PC Zone, CPZ71B, Customer Interface
Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ

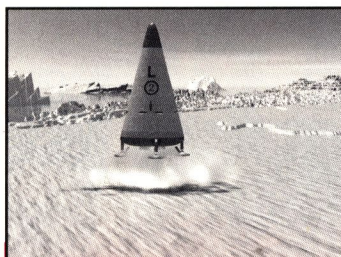
Rules: All entries to be received by Friday 28th February.

The editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into.

Giant steps are what you take



A planet with a liquid surface needs a floating ramp – but no sewage problems.



The first thing to do is protect colonists from the harsh environment. Thermals anyone?



Perfect. I can see it now: huge hydroponic gardens, anti-grav leisure houses...



Star GL 152 has no habitable planets... so why waste time looking at it?

Sierra colonise the stars again as Dynamix set to work on a sequel to the seemingly age-old resource management game *Outpost*.

ANYONE REMEMBER SIERRA'S MINOR HIT *Outpost* – an original and fabulous-looking space colonisation game released to some acclaim towards the back end of 1995?

Those of you who do remember it will recall that *Outpost* was one of those infuriating games that looked really great, should have been engrossing and rewarding, but in reality was a frustrating mess, lacking focus and caught



That's more like it. It's freezing cold, but you've managed your resources nicely. Even down to the septic tanks top left.

in possession of some serious cranky AI. Sierra hope to remedy this in the sequel *Outpost 2: Colonial Rebellion*.

The biggest difference between *Outpost 2* and its predecessor is that this time everything in the game will be governed by the laws of 'real-time', and will not be a tile-dropping, turned-based affair as we at first expected.

Colonial Rebellion will again see the player building bubbles, tubes and mines in an attempt to colonise inhospitable, far-away planets, but this time there will be more emphasis on the battle components of the game, including a strong multi-player bias.

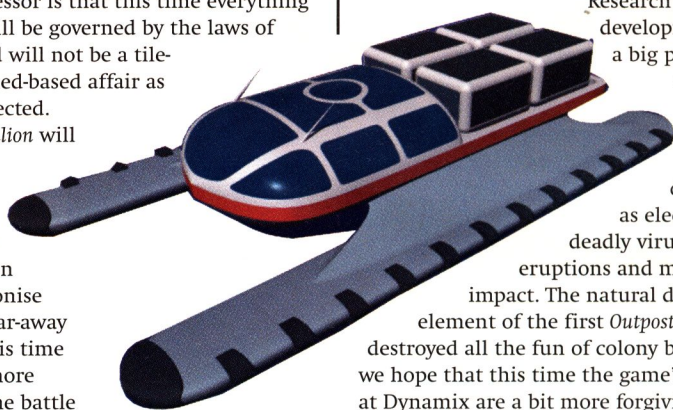
Goals are definable by the player, so in one game it could be a race to see who can mine

the most ore in a given time, who can launch a spacecraft first, who can reach a certain population level, or simply blow the living daylights out of your opponents.

Research and development will play a big part, as always in this kind of game, as does reaction to natural disasters such as electrical storms, deadly viruses, volcanic eruptions and meteorite impact.

The natural disasters element of the first *Outpost* completely destroyed all the fun of colony building, so we hope that this time the game's designers at Dynamix are a bit more forgiving!

Outpost 2: Colonial Rebellion is scheduled for a summer release and will be available for Windows 95 only. For more details check Sierra's Web site at <http://www.sierra.com>. **Z**



The North will rise again

The race for the top football management sim continues with Gremlin announcing the latest in the *Premier Manager* series.

IN RECENT SEASONS, THE FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT CROWN HAS BEEN PROUDLY WORN BY DOMARK'S *CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2*, CONSIGNING LEGIONS OF FANS to darkened rooms and causing more sleepless nights than a diet of amphetamines. A new threat is set to emerge though, from Sheffield of all places, a city not immediately associated with footballing success. Of course, it's our old friends Gremlin, and the game in question is *Premier Manager 97*, the fourth mutation of their long-running series.

Details are currently sketchy, but we have managed to ascertain that all four divisions will be included, a must for all genuine football fans, as there are few things in life more sickening than buying a football management game only to discover that your favourite team has been overlooked. Furthermore, there will be accurate histories and stats for all major European players, clubs and managers, as well as almost 1000 player and squad photos, which should appeal to anyone who regularly pissed away their dinner money on Panini stickers. Things have moved on apace at Gremlin since the last *Premier Manager* game, and the '97 version will be the first to benefit from the *Actua Sports* treatment.

A vastly improved AI is also promised and managers will be able to watch the action as it happens, which probably explains why the game will be Pentium-only. So, all that remains to do is scrape together 40 quid, stock up on nachos and spot cream, and mark 9 March in your diaries. Sheepskins at the ready. **Z**

Athletic	Espanyol
1. Valencia	1. Toni
2. Tabuenka	2. Cristóbal
3. Lizarazu	3. Torres Mestre
4. Carlos García	4. Herrera
5. Karanka	5. Pachettino
6. Urutia	6. Pralija
7. José Mari	7. Benítez
8. Guerrero	8. Arteaga
9. Urzaiz	9. Cuadec
10. Alkiza	10. Brnovic
11. Etxeberria	11. Lardin

As you can see from this shot, *Premier Manager 97* is being developed in Spain for Gremlin – hence the Spanish player names.

OPERTAS	Newcastle
1. Shearer	1. Shearer
2. Forster	2. Forster
3. Williams	3. Williams
4. Williams	4. Williams
5. Williams	5. Williams
6. Williams	6. Williams
7. Williams	7. Williams
8. Williams	8. Williams
9. Williams	9. Williams
10. Williams	10. Williams
11. Williams	11. Williams
12. Williams	12. Williams
13. Williams	13. Williams
14. Williams	14. Williams
15. Williams	15. Williams
16. Williams	16. Williams
17. Williams	17. Williams
18. Williams	18. Williams
19. Williams	19. Williams
20. Williams	20. Williams

In-form Huckerby has moved from Coventry to Newcastle United. Each player has his own star rating, position and international status.

PROMANAGER MENU	LINE-UP
1. RESULTS	1. RESULTS
2. TRANSFER	2. TRANSFER
3. FOLLOW UP	3. FOLLOW UP
4. TRANSFER MARKET	4. TRANSFER MARKET
5. SIGN	5. SIGN
6. START	6. START
7. FINANCES	7. FINANCES
8. DECISIONS	8. DECISIONS
9. DECISIONS	9. DECISIONS
10. DECISIONS	10. DECISIONS
11. DECISIONS	11. DECISIONS
12. DECISIONS	12. DECISIONS
13. DECISIONS	13. DECISIONS
14. DECISIONS	14. DECISIONS
15. DECISIONS	15. DECISIONS
16. DECISIONS	16. DECISIONS
17. DECISIONS	17. DECISIONS
18. DECISIONS	18. DECISIONS
19. DECISIONS	19. DECISIONS
20. DECISIONS	20. DECISIONS

Premier Manager 97 is immaculately presented, with superb wipes and fades between screens, and incredibly crisp icons and menus throughout.

POWER



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F1



it's time to burn!!!

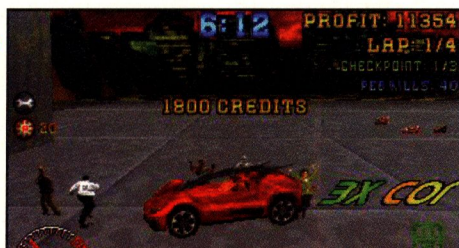


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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

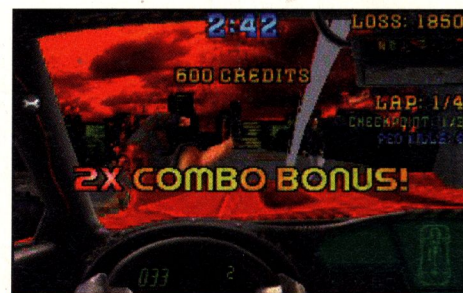
SCI spy, with my little eye



Carmageddon: bovine Impressionism, without the aid of a brush. Salvador Dalí would have approved.



(Above) Opponents range from a blade-infested dragster to a supercharged battle tank.



Carmageddon gives a whole new meaning to the term 'road rage'. Don't try this at home, kids!



1997 looks like being a very busy year for SCI, so let's have a gander at what they've got planned for us.

WHEN PC ZONE FIRST CLAPPED EYES ON SCI's ultra gory futuristic driving game, *Carmageddon*, way back in Issue 45 we just knew that it was going to be something rather special. Not that it breaks new ground graphically, nor does it take an original slant on the, some would say, over-subscribed, racing genre, but because it's completely utterly bonkers and outrageously over the top in an 'innocent' and 'fun' kind of way.

Carmageddon will be carrying a self-imposed 18 certificate when it comes out in April, which may put some people off, but having recently seen more of the game we think it could do for driving games what *Quake* did for shoot 'em ups last year.

Players will be able to drive almost anywhere in *Carmageddon*, as long as the accurate physics model allows it – even underwater the battle continues and the cars react realistically there too, easily tipping over

with the force of the wet stuff. It's all mouth-frothingly insane and we love it. There will be 25 demented maniacs to take on over 36 different courses in your quest to become Prince of the Pile-up. And that's before you begin smearing pedestrians and farmyard animals over the road for artistic merit...

Mind you, if SCI attract controversy with *Carmageddon* it'll be nothing compared to the storm that will no doubt follow the April release of their adventure thriller *Hopkins FBI* – undoubtedly one of the goriest games we've seen on the PC to date.

With a plot so twisted and intricate we'd be daft to go into it here, *Hopkins FBI* finds the titular agent on the trail of a mass-murdering villain with a penchant for cutting up ladies in a number of sickeningly creative ways.

SCI seem unnaturally calm about the content:

"The whole story is so good," said lead tester Justin Wateridge. "If someone sees the game running, it usually prompts a reaction." Which is okay as long as that person doesn't happen to be Mary Whitehouse.



Full Metal Pigeon: watch out for that stiff upper lip – you could have someone's eye out with it.

Hopkins FBI will feature over 100 locations, all hand-drawn in SVGA, most containing teasing logic puzzles and various sub-games to solve in a race to re-capture a long-dead arch-criminal and prevent a world-wide massacre.

At the other end of the SCI scale comes the wonderfully wacky *Full Metal Pigeon* – a promising single or multi-player WWI flight shoot 'em up with lots of fat Germans and stiff upper-lipped Allies fighting it out for control of the skies.

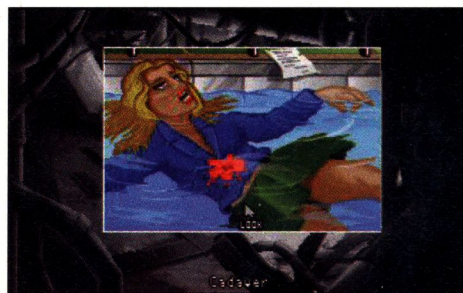
Full Metal Pigeon utilises an improved version of the *SWIV 3D* engine in which the numerous missions are played out against the computer, or over a single split-screen with a friend. Earning your 'wings' as a fighter pilot requires completion of a range of missions, from sausage factory bombing to dangerous reconnaissance runs, all while your courageous efforts are being hampered by squadrons of opposing fighters, bombers, as well as ground and sea artillery. It's all light-hearted and fun, with ne'er a drop of a blood to be seen in the process. *Full Metal Pigeon* will be out in June. **Z**



Evil villain Bernie Berckson is sentenced to death in *Hopkins FBI*, but returns to wreak more havoc.



A bank robbery goes horribly wrong and loads of people die in a hail of bullets. Mmm, nice.



Hopkins' girlfriend, secret agent Samantha Collins, is captured and terrorised by the bloodthirsty bad guy.

HORROR SCOPE

TAURUS

Your future is in your hands.

The Taurans have entered your aspect and personal conflict is a strong possibility.

But don't despair. You have the intelligence to match their naturally aggressive streak.

Prospects for wealth are good if you take the initiative and don't run away from your problems.

Take control and you could be looking at promotion

On New Haven, the remotest of mankind's frontier developments, the countdown to annihilation has begun. Command the invading Taurans or the defending humans in an epic strategic battle for



survival. Research technologies, build Cities, plan attacks, then take your hardware to war across occupied territories. From plasma rifles to Nuclear Warheads - Fallen Haven has the full Horror Scope.



Fallen Haven. The future is in the stars

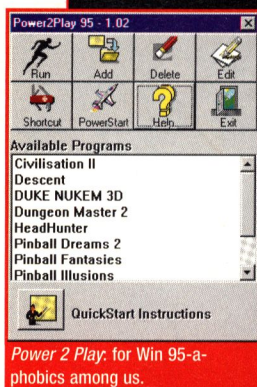
COMING SOON FOR IBM PC CD-ROM. www.imagicgames.co.uk

Dispatches

UP YOUR PC POWER!

Pinballmeisters 21st Century have come up with a cunning device to make life easier for PC virgins. *Power2Play* is an application designed to help Windows 95 users launch their library of DOS games from Windows 95 via a very simple interface. An autosearch function will present a list of compatible products – which already include *Doom*, *Duke Nukem 3D* and *MechWarrior* – and a simple process will allow users to manually add

their favourite DOS games and applications to the list for *Power2Play* to run. Frequently-used programs will be accessible via a desktop shortcut. As well as a comprehensive help file and a list of FAQs, *Power2Play* comes with approximately 70 shareware games to help users get started.



Power 2 Play: for Win 95-a-phobics among us.

You heard it here first, folks – Win 95ers can also be a bunch of DOSsers...

YAW NOT SINGING ANYMORE

TecnoPlus, purveyors of quality computer peripherals and accessories, have announced a new joystick that looks set to test the manual dexterity of the keenest of PC gamers. The *3DEE* joystick features yaw, also known as rotation about the z-axis, giving you the ability to look all around you in 3D games without changing course – assuming, of course, that the games are compatible. Yaw can also be used for rudder control in flight simulators, and in addition the *3DEE* comes with a throttle control, four main control buttons and a further four programmable buttons. At a reasonable £69.99 this is a serious stick, for serious yaw and serious joy. Seriously. Call 01483 718077 for more information.

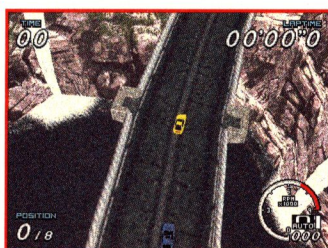
SOUND AS A POUND

Dolby Surround, the technology that revolutionised the home cinema market, is coming to a PC near you. Dolby have been working closely with Microsoft, Intel and Motorola, and Virtual Dolby Surround requires only two speakers to achieve the full wraparound effect. The system could well become the standard for multimedia audio, and publishers who have already produced games in Dolby Surround include Electronic Arts, Europress, Interplay, NovaLogic, Psygnosis and Sony.

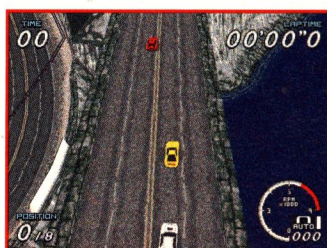
EMPTY YOUR BACK WHEELS

High-speed shenanigans are due from EIDOS Interactive and Accolade with the pending release of the irksomely named *Test Drive: Off Road*. Players will be able to choose from a quartet of 4x4 vehicles: the Hummer, Land Rover Defender 90, Jeep Wrangler and Chevrolet K-1500 Z71, each with distinctive handling characteristics. The 12 tracks will encompass a variety of terrains, including dirt, rocks, sand and snow, with variable weather conditions adding to the treacherous nature of the environments. *Test Drive: Off Road* will offer a single race, multi-player tournaments or full season mode, and will feature split-screen head-to-head races and four-way network play. Vroom.

Go, go, Speedster, go!



An addictive racing game with impressive 3D graphics and a good driving model.



Speedster has already been described as a 'Micro Machines for adults'...



... but I told my Mum to keep her opinions to herself. And not to call me at work.

New arcade racing fun and thrills a-plenty from Psygnosis.

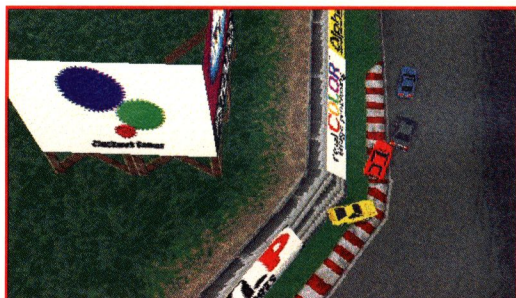
SPEEDSTER, OUT IN APRIL FROM PSYGNOSIS, IS a two-player, split-screen, 'top down' racing game with an impressive, vertigo-inducing, scrolling 3D landscape and a whole host of other touches to boot.

Developed by Clockwork Games (the people who brought us *3D Lemmings*), *Speedster* is to feature nine racing tracks strewn with bridges, chicanes, dips and jumps, all of which, when viewed overhead, give a real sense of depth and distance. The 3D engine used to achieve this is similar in many ways to *Syndicate Wars*' own graphical style, if you can picture that in a racing game.

The player will begin with eight vehicles to race with, split into two categories – High Performance or Heavy Duty – but eight more cars will appear as the player progresses through the game. These range from sleek racers like the Europa Tourer, to heavy-duty muthas like the HGV. Each car will have

its own characteristics and will handle differently depending on the surface it is racing on.

Whether opting for a race against a ghost car in time trial mode, a friend in split-screen, or against the impressive computer AI in a full championship season, *Speedster* should keep those of us who like our racing games fast and simple glued to our monitors for quite some time. **Z**



The elevation of the overhead view can be altered while playing, but during replays the camera zooms about all over the place.

Can you kick it?

More renowned for their comprehensive collection of *Sim* games, Maxis look to be breaking away from their traditional fare by taking over the reins of the long-running *Kick Off* series.

AAIN DEVELOPED BY ANCO, KICK OFF 97 SHOULD BE added to the ever-growing football game mountain this Spring. Last year's effort was fairly poor, but hopefully the '97 version will be an improvement, despite the involvement of three Arsenal players. Motion capture is becoming *de rigueur* and this time the shiny ping pong ball treatment was given to Ian Wright, Patrick Vieira and David 'Spunky' Seaman, MBE. A big name commentator is also a prerequisite these days, and the man behind the mike is none other than ITV's nasally-endowed Jim Rosenthal.

It's on the pitch that it counts, though, and Maxis are promising exciting, fast-paced arcade action with a choice



of polygon or sprite players in a fully rendered 3D environment. Traditionalists will be

pleased to hear there is also a 2D option, offering gameplay at up to 50 frames per second. The choice of teams is also important, and *Kick Off 97* will feature 76 international sides, as well as 14 European leagues consisting of over 250 clubs. With four types of major competition to choose from, and a host of customisable options, Maxis are hoping *Kick Off 97* will be in a league of its own. **Arf. Z**



It's probably the only football game to offer both 2D and 3D playing views.



Hands up everyone who hates football. Okay, stop reading this and leave the pitch.



To simulate match day, sit in the cold until your feet go numb and your nose goes red.

RED SKY AT
NIGHT:
PREPARE TO
FIGHT...



**CONQUEST
EARTH**

**DATA
DESIGN**
Interactive

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

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Dispatches

FREE LOCAL CALLS FROM BT?

A recent announcement by British Telecom may have far-reaching implications for Internet users in the UK. In response to competition from the likes of Mercury and the cable companies, BT are considering the possibility of a number of packages that would include free local calls, albeit with a higher quarterly line rental. As Internet access is charged at local call rates, this proposed move would effectively give Net heads licence to roam the World Wide Web for *gratis*, bringing this country into line with America, where a similar deal has been in place for some time and where Internet usage is by far the highest in the world. At the moment, the idea of free local calls is merely a suggestion and regulatory approval would be needed before any such move could go ahead. One-handed Net surfers will no doubt await further developments with interest.

C&C FOR WINDOWS 95

Visitors from another planet, long-term coma patients and people with no interest at all in computer games may have missed out on a minor release from Virgin by the name of *Command & Conquer*. Not to worry, as the classic top-down strategy war game will soon be available for Windows 95, with all the hi-res gubbins one could reasonably expect. If Santa recently delivered a shiny new PC with Win 95 pre-installed and you're after somewhere to begin your descent into gaming hell, look no further than *C&C*, retailing at £44.99. Be warned, though, you'll end up with no friends and eyes like piss-holes in the snow.



You've got your PC. You've got your Win 95. You need *C&C for Windows 95*!

OOPS!

In last month's news we said EA's *Hexagon Cartel* was a *Jane's* simulation, when really we all knew that it wasn't. Well, most of us. It is, in fact, a product of German developer Ascon, so we apologise for any confusion/distress/death caused by our slip. Won't do it again.

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WADE?

Gremlin's *Actua Sports* series is set to expand with the summer release of *Actua Tennis*. Again, motion capture has been used to recreate all those thrilling tennis moves, although Gremlin insist that this won't hinder the playability. The game will feature singles and doubles tournaments, ladders, and single matches, with a range of difficulty options and full commentary.



Hey - where did my tennis players go?!

Hot hardcore action

Not, as you may think, an appreciation of the movie skills of John Holmes, but a ballast-crushing couple of tank games from Gremlin.



A bottleneck results in a high-speed (15mph!) smash in Gremlin's *Hardcore 4x4*. Who's gonna clear the mess?

THE INCREASINGLY PROLIFIC GREMLIN HAVE ANNOUNCED two more games for the first half of this year, both involving large vehicles. First up is *Hardcore 4x4*, a conversion of last year's half-decent PlayStation game. An off-road racer, it gives the player an opportunity to hurtle round six rugged circuits in a huge four-wheel-drive truck. Much attention has been paid to the real-world physics, which apparently took over a year to develop. The end result is that each individual wheel should behave exactly as it would in reality, although how anyone can vouch for this is a mystery, unless of course they are experienced monster truck racers. *Hardcore 4x4* will feature a multi-player option, and should be available at the end of April.

Tank games aren't usually guaranteed to set the pulse racing, but *Arms Race* sounds like a welcome break from the norm, set in a 3D world similar to that of Gremlin's *Re-Loaded*. A strong puzzle element is promised, and it is currently shaping up to be a cunning combination of shoot 'em up and strategy. Gremlin are aiming for a stylish, clubby feel, and a celebrity name is being mooted to provide the soundtrack. We should know more before its 30 June release, so watch this space, tank fans. **Z**



In *Arms Race*, we're promised a strong puzzle element as well as blasting action.



Arms Race looks like *Assault Rigs*, but probably owes more to *Marble Madness*.



Hardcore 4x4: those monster trucks think they can bloody drive anywhere, eh?

Going down... again

Everyone's favourite tunnel combat game, *Descent II*, is hauled into '97 with a number of new features and a graphical nip and tuck. Not claustrophobic, are ya?

GOOD NEWS FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF FLYING down winding tunnels shooting big mad robots comes by way of the announcement of *Descent II: The Infinite Abyss*, an upgrade which should give a new lease of life to Interplay's classic 3D shoot 'em up. The package includes both a Windows 95 version and an accelerated DOS version, with an array of treats available for *Descent* freaks everywhere. For starters, there are 22 new levels to negotiate, including sewers, rat mazes and

cell farms - whatever they are. There are also 12 new robots to come to terms with, as well as a selection of new bosses featuring modified AI. Those partial to a bit of DIY will be able to use the *Descent II* mission builder and robot editor, and there is even an option to convert *Descent I* levels to *Descent II* levels. A pulsing new soundtrack is promised, although whether the services of Ogre out of Skinny Puppy have again been enlisted remains a closely guarded secret. **Z**



Red Space Invaders attack great big winking red eye. Now where's that Anusol?



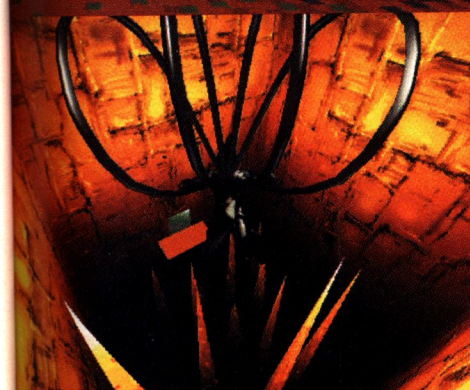
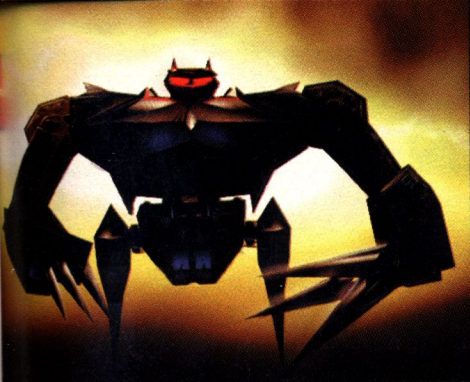
Just one of the 12 new robots hiding in the hallways of *Descent II: Infinite Abyss*.



Includes mission builder and robot creation utilities for those who like to dabble....



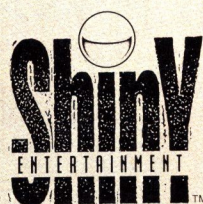
... with creating gorgeous hair nets that Ena Sharples would die for. She is dead?



MASTERCHEF DESTROYS KITCHEN?

»Looks like being one of the best PC games ever «

PC ZONE



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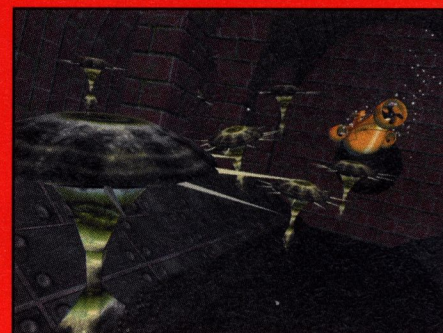
HOTSHOTS

Having survived the rigours of minus 20 wind chill through the whole of January, the games industry is settling down for a booming Spring and a bumper crop of new titles for us to indulge. Here you'll find the latest new shots of all the big games currently in development and awaiting our attention. Look out for more details and full previews in 1997!



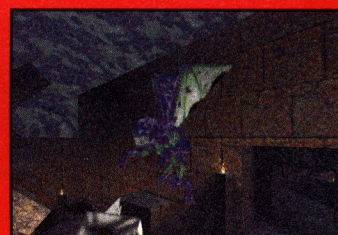
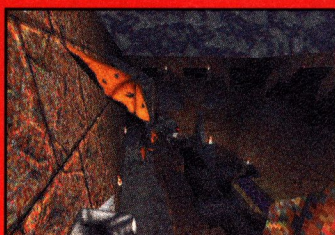
SUB CULTURE (VIRGIN)

Sub Culture's development team at Criterion are quietly confident of their sub-aquatic adventure/shoot 'em up, and looking at these new, in-game shots you have to agree with them. Utilising a similar graphical style to the forthcoming *Creation* from Bullfrog, it'll be interesting to see which of the two lies atop the food chain after their mid-'97 appearances.



HEXEN 2 (RAVEN)

It looks better and better every time we see new shots! There's absolutely no doubt that *Hexen 2* – so far pencilled in for a summer release – will be one of the games of 1997. So far, a number of new monsters have been added (as you can see here), and that licensed *Quake* engine is proving a real boon for Raven's talented level designers. GT Interactive will be responsible for the game's UK release, and more info can be found at <http://www.raven.com>.



HAVE A NICE DAY (21ST CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT)

Following our world exclusive announcement last month, we have new shots of 21st Century Entertainment's forthcoming race/killing game *Have A Nice Day*. Despite the ridiculous name (which is likely to change before the game is released), *Have A Nice Day* is the driving game equivalent of a night on the piss around Doncaster – dangerous as hell, but infinitely rewarding if you make it home unscathed. It'll go head-to-head with SCI's *Carmageddon* later in the year.





WIN! WIN! WIN!

A whole heap of NovaLogic gear!

Including: a leather jacket, pilot shades, record bags, T-shirts, diecast model F-22s, Microsoft SideWinder Pro joysticks and copies of the excellent F-22 Lightning 2 combat sim.

One lucky winner will win all of the above goodies

Ten runners-up will receive their very own copy of NovaLogic's F-22 Lightning 2

All you have to do to win these items is answer the simple question below, jot down your name and address and send it to the address on the coupon to reach us by 28 February 1997.

QUESTION:

What is NovaLogic's much lauded terrain generator called?

- a) Voxel Space 2 technology ☐ b) Vauxhall Espace technology ☐
c) Vauxhall Conference technology ☐ Tick one box only

Name:

Job Title:

Company Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime phone number:

☐ Please tick if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies

☐ Tick if under 18 years of age

Please tick one only: Are you a current subscriber? ☐
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Terms and conditions: All usual restrictions apply, for a copy of the rules please write to PC Zone at the usual address.

Send this coupon to: PC Zone/NovaLogic Competition (CPCZ73A), Bradley Pavillions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ, United Kingdom

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...and every tenth caller gets a Gold Pack with
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Life isn't about following orders anymore. It's about finding your own rules. Using your head. Then kicking post-apocalyptic Australian arse!

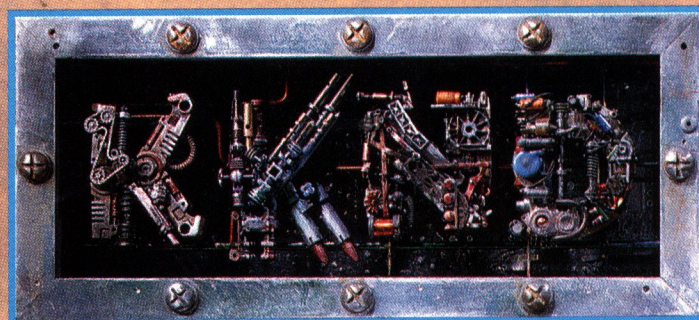
KKND is the advanced strategy war game with brains as well as balls, where your hordes attack, defend and think for themselves. Then put the boot in.



Windows and DOS SGVA graphics show battle scarred cities, Mute beasts fighting Survivor high tech, with varied missions, live-action video, hard core soundtracks and dark humour that's as sick as a parrot.

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our price

Welcome to PC Zone's very own version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will fly off the shelves in the coming weeks.

1

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 (Virgin)
£29.99


6

MONKEY ISLAND 1 & 2

(Virgin) £14.99



2

TOMB RAIDER

 (EIDOS Interactive)
£29.99


7

USM2

(Sierra) £29.99

 plus exclusive Fantasy Football
Manager Diary while stocks last


3

FIFA '97

 (Electronic Arts)
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8

DARK FORCES

 (Virgin)
£14.99


4

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 (96/97)

(EIDOS Interactive) £19.99



9

TIE FIGHTERS COLLECTORS

 (Virgin)
£14.99


5

SCREAMER 2

 (Virgin)
£22.99


10

QUAKE

 (GT Interactive)
£29.99


AS WELL AS THE USUAL GREAT DEALS FROM OUR PRICE THIS month we can reveal a top new offer that'll keep you and your PC warm over the winter months. Throughout February, Our Price has the Kixx Multibuy offer up and running: a great way to buy your favourite classic and new titles.

The 3 for £20 offer is available on a selection of 19 titles, including *Championship Manager 2*, *Under A Killing Moon* and more recent releases like *Buried In Time* and *Shellshock*.

The games on offer are usually priced from £9.99 to £12.99, so if you take advantage of the full offer and choose three games, you can save ten pounds or more!

And, as a special deal for PC Zone readers, you can also claim a free Kixx ski hat – the ultimate in cool for the freezing weather.

EXCLUSIVE OFFER!
**PC
ZONE**

For more information on the latest Kixx games see the Our Price ad on page 31

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our price

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS. 1. Coupon only valid in Our Price stores with a dedicated games department. 2. Coupon only valid if customer has taken part in Multibuy promotion. 3. Coupon only valid while stocks last. 4. Expiry date for offer is 28 February 1997.

This month's chart is bursting with quality titles, so get down to your local store! Perfect for the long winter nights – spend them in front of your PC with Kane, the luvverly Lara, and Des 'The Guvner' Lynham.

WATCH THIS SPACE!
FOR MORE NEWS
FROM OUR PRICE
NEXT MONTH!

OUR PRICE QUESTION:

Name two of the commentators featured in *FIFA '97*

Rules and Restrictions: All entries must be received by 28 February 1997. No correspondence will be entered into – if you ring us up we'll dial 1471 and program your number into our fax machine at 2am. The Editor's decision is final and winners will be notified by post. All other usual restrictions apply.

Answers on a postcard to:
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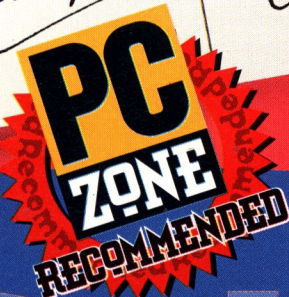
DISCLAIMER: The Top 10 printed is correct at the time of going to press but positions, titles and prices may vary throughout the month.

GREETINGS FROM THE WORLD OF MERIDIAN 59



THE FIRST INTERNET-BASED 3D MUD

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In conversation with... Ian Livingstone

EIDOS' soon-to-be-released *Deathtrap Dungeon* is starting to look pretty smart indeed. In the first of a two-part look behind the scenes of the game, Paul Presley talks to the man who started the whole thing off over 20 years ago.

Paul Presley: Let's start with a brief history of Ian Livingstone, if you will.

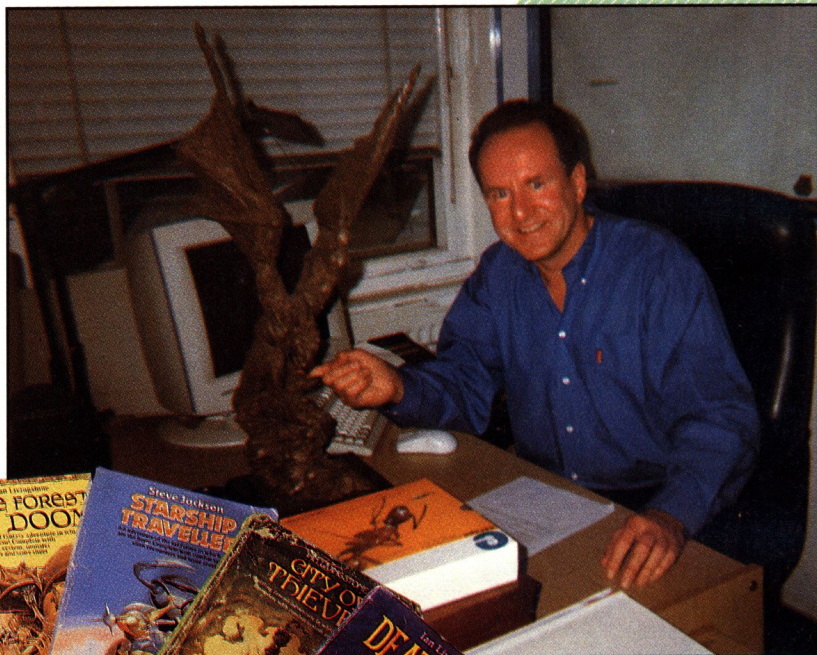
Ian Livingstone: I began Games Workshop in 1975 with an old schoolchum, Steve Jackson. We started off distributing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* and then established our own games like *Warhammer* and a whole range of wargames. We also started *White Dwarf* and *Citadel Miniatures*. Then one drunken night, around 1980, Steve and I came up with the concept of *Fighting Fantasy*. We wrote the first one in '81 and Penguin published it in '82 and so it came to a stage where we had to run GW during the day and try to find the time at night to write the gamebooks.

PP: What was the initial inspiration for the FF concept?

IL: Well, obviously Steve and I were D&D freaks at that time and I used to read tons and tons of science fiction and fantasy books and it was just one of those wacky conversations you have that goes, "Hey, wouldn't it be a great idea if...", you know. Because sometimes you'd organise a game of D&D and just one person would turn up which would be useless. So it was just one of those very simple ideas that caught on.

PP: There have now been something like 14 million copies of FF books sold worldwide in over 20 languages. Did you have any idea how big they were going to be?

IL: Not to the extent they became. We'd had no idea how successful they were going to be from Penguin because they had been pretty lukewarm about them at first. Luckily, they



(Above right) Ian Livingstone and pet.



(Above) The *Fighting Fantasy* series... or six of them. There wasn't enough room in the studio to take all 50.

(Below) "You were just great in that film over Christmas. Can I have your autograph?"

had a new MD called Peter May who had just come over from the States and he thought that it was a pretty radical idea to fuse a book and a game into one and call it a gamebook. But they didn't really do any promotion and the books didn't sell very well in the first few months. But the word of mouth started to spread and the sales picked up, the books were reprinted and reprinted and then *Deathtrap Dungeon* (the sixth

in the series) came out in 1984. Normally a children's book would sell about 5000 copies, but in its first year *Deathtrap Dungeon* sold over 400,000.

PP: Did you consider them to be children's books yourselves?

IL: Well, we had a long conversation with Penguin which put back the initial publication date by about six weeks. They were umming and ahing - were they going to be on the Penguin label or the Puffin label [Penguin children's division] and we didn't really care as we were writing them for ourselves. They eventually decided to use Puffin as they thought the average age would be about 12. I think it's younger now as kids are getting brighter. It's actually about ten.

PP: What led from GW to Domark/Eidos?

IL: Well, it became a problem running Workshop by day and writing the books by night, so instead of spontaneous combustion we thought we had to back off a little bit. By 1985, having managed to avoid blowing up, we had a guy called Bryan Ansell who was running a lot of GW on a day-to-day basis and so he continued until I finally sold out of Workshop in '92, retired, went to live in Spain and did all the usual retirement stuff - got a boat, a car, went south. After a year, though, I got bored and came back. In 1993 I invested





some money in Domark, admittedly in their cartridge development side at the wrong time – my own fault for not being diligent enough – and I gradually got sucked back into management. Which suited me as there's only so much golf you can play, so many seas you can sail.

I had come back originally as a non-executive director at Domark, but I realised that to protect my own investment I'd have to make some pretty radical changes, so I turned the development away from the traditional platform games we had been making and started up the advanced technology group. They are the core team that have developed the engine for *Deathtrap Dungeon*. I got rid of all our exposure to the 16-bit market and in the process, while we were developing for the PC, I met Charles Cornwall who was head of EIDOS Technology (as they were at the time). He needed a showcase for his compression technology and we needed really good compression software, so we did a very sweet deal and found we got on really well.

PP: How did the merger between Domark and EIDOS actually come about?

IL: The thing about Charles is that he comes from a background of corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, and we just found that we worked really well together as a team, him being all-business and us being all-creative. There aren't many software companies left now that have a content guy and a finance guy working in tandem. A lot of companies are being run by marketing or sales people who have neither a handle on content or have a handle on finance the way Charles does.

So it was a fortuitous meeting and it was his idea to merge the two companies in 1995. Once we went public we also acquired us Gold and with it Core Design who brought with them the wonderful Lara Croft and *Tomb Raider*. And here we are today.

(Above) At least she won't have to worry about tan lines in that thing.

(Right) The EIDOS Advanced Technology Group pretend to be a football team.

The present

PP: Of all the FF books available, why did you decide on *Deathtrap Dungeon* for the computer?

IL: I always thought it was the best of the books. After *The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain* it was the best selling of the titles and of all the mail I used to get, it was the one people seemed to enjoy the most. Obviously, people are aware of it and know what it's all about. It's not one of those silly fantasies but is more realistic, more gothic. It also keeps in with the GW ethos – anything with spikes and orcs.

PP: Has it stuck faithfully to the storyline in the book?

IL: I think it's best described as 'loosely based on' the book. It's much, much bigger than the book, the levels are massive, a lot of the monsters from the book are in there – the Bloodbeast from the cover, for instance – and some of the puzzles have remained. But overall it's just much, much bigger.

PP: How involved have you been with its creation?

IL: A lot in the initial stage, obviously. I told [the programmers], "This is the style of game I want, I want this kind of artwork, I want it to have both a third-person perspective and a first-person perspective." That was quite a tough decision to make, actually, because it's a lot more complicated to create a third-person game than a first-person



one. As it happens, we were designing it around the same time as *Tomb Raider*. So I was involved a lot at the beginning of the design stages, but then we got Richard Halliwell – who was the designer of *Space Hulk* and *Warhammer* at Games Workshop – and Jamie Thompson – ex-editor of *White Dwarf* and author of a couple of copycat *Fighting Fantasy* books – onto the team and they got heavily involved in the design process.

PP: Did the acquisition of Core and *Tomb Raider* affect the game's design at all?

IL: For me, *Tomb Raider* is a milestone in gaming history – fantastic atmosphere, great technology, a strong female lead character, very fluid, the animation of Lara is incredible. But it's more of a puzzle-solving adventure game, whereas *Deathtrap Dungeon* is more combat-orientated. There are loads more creatures that you can come across, over 50 animated monsters at the moment, all with varying complexities of intelligence. It's not just a matter of going in and shooting them, there



(Left) The hero employs the Stand In A Macho Way And Hope It Gives Up tactic.



(Above) True to form, EIDOS' in-house music department is located in a cold room at the very back of the building, behind various cupboards, broom closets and scaffolding.

(Top right) If you think the hero looks a little rough, you should see him after a real fight. Your health is illustrated by a steadily deteriorating physical make-up.

(Centre) Well, something had to predate the taxi.



are quite involved combat routines needed to get through the dungeon. There are puzzles in the game. I come from a strategy background so there's a good mix of the two elements. They're not silly puzzles either, you don't have to put an inverted eggcup on your head and whistle 'Dixie' to get through a door. They're all logical. You're not at the mercy of some twisted lunatic in Dunstable.

Also, when you look at the technology, the dynamic lighting in there, the shadowing effects, I think that you'll be pretty impressed. It's like a recipe, you just keep adding a little bit here and a little bit there but eventually we've had to say, "Right, enough is enough now."

PP: Has the game changed much since its initial designs?

IL: It's got a lot wackier! There's always the danger, when doing heroic fantasy, of taking yourself too seriously so I wanted to inject some humour into it, but not humour that irritates. So we've got some strange weapons in there - things like pigs with dynamite strapped to their back so you can use exploding pigs as a weapon. And there are all sorts of little teasing things, like the little imp that drops his pants

and moons at you, tries to

lure you down passageways and really infuriates you.

But if you do get annoyed and follow him without due care and attention you'll be in big trouble.

It's all designed to make things a little bit larger than life. *Deathtrap Dungeon* has stuck pretty much to a medieval world, but at the end of the day people do get tired of games that just have hand-to-hand fighting, so we've added ranged weapons, spells, there's a blunderbuss in there. Watching *Doom* and *Quake* and *Duke Nukem*, everyone likes to see a good explosion here and there. So there's plenty of opportunity for that. I also wanted the graphics to be fantastic, so that people wouldn't say, "Oh, okay game but crap graphics." I wanted it to be really realistic, close to the graphic quality we had at Workshop. I mean, the graphics there, I can say with hand on heart, were pretty damn good. We always wanted things really realistic instead of the more traditional fantasy artwork which has always been a bit naff and cutesy. Too cartoonish. We wanted hard core, gothic, spiky orc stuff.



The future

PP: Are we going to see more of the books turned into games?

IL: You're more likely to see *Deathtrap Dungeon 2* with one of the other book's title in brackets. It's a very crowded marketplace now and to try to capture mind share and establish a brand is hard. If you started off with a completely new title, like *The Forest Of Doom* or *City Of Thieves* for instance, you'd have to try and establish them as a new title. A lot of the problems of capturing people's attention are solved if you use a sequel.

You're already established then. You can use the same engine and people have already made the link to the original game.

PP: Do you feel that this conversion to the PC signals an end for the more traditional RPG/non-computer gaming market?

IL: Well, people didn't give up the radio when they got TV, and the newspaper didn't fold when the radio arrived.

There will always be different forms of gaming. People still enjoy the three-dimensionality of tabletop games. Complexity is dying out. When I was young I used to play Avalon Hill wargames with massive complicated rulebooks and thousands of unit counters stacked up on the board. People haven't really got time for that any more. You've got to make things accessible and easy to play, which is one of the reasons why computer games do so well - they're pretty immediate to play. We're all fighting for people's ever-decreasing time.

You're up against the Internet, video, books, other types of games, cinema and so on.

PP: Have you ever had any urges to go back and write another FF book?

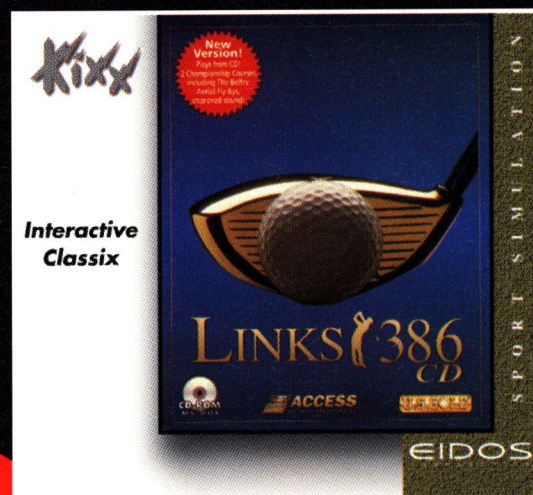
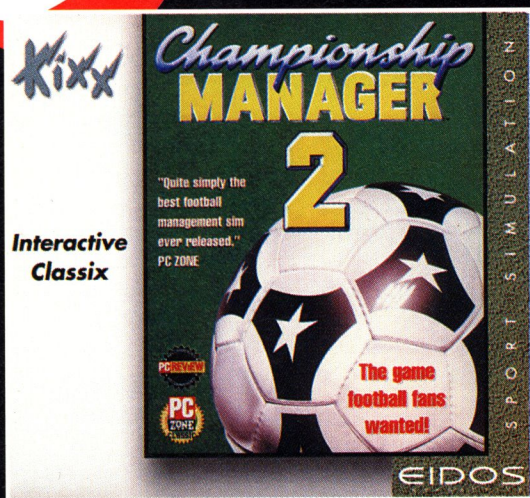
IL: (Recoils in terror) No, don't make me! I did do a series for younger kids just

over a year ago called *The Adventures Of Goldhawk* which I quite enjoyed, and I wrote

Fighting Fantasy Book 50 - Return To Firetop Mountain

which brought things full circle so to speak, but I think 20-odd books is enough. There are only so many things that can happen in a bloody dungeon! **Z**





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IN PRODUCTION



A new hope... for gaming, that is. **David McCandless** risks life and limb to bring the secret plans of a weapon so powerful it will end civilisation (or at least its social life) forever – *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*.

X-Wing vs TIE Fighter

re-engage everyone's *Star Wars* fantasies. And, since its release is timed neatly with the re-mastered films, the game will probably bring in a new wave of *enfants de Thatcher* who were born after it came out and think that *BattleStar Galactica* is all the sci-fi the '80s had to offer (poor things).

Larry Holland agrees. He's the don at LucasArts, the mortal man who brought the first *X-Wing* to our PC screens in 1993, and has overseen the triumphant sprinkling of sequels, including *TIE Fighter* and *Dark Forces*. Larry (or Lazza as we like to call him) and his fleet of artists and coders at Totally Games have been sweating over this project for nearly two years. But why, with such a gorgeous thing in their hands, have they taken so long to get to 'base two'? Apparently, their policy is: you don't have to be the first to be the best.

They've been quietly sitting on their haunches, developing away on their multi-player stuff, while network landmarks like *Doom*, *Descent*, and *Quake* have rolled by.

"Our feeling is that once the market is

Good bits from the films

1. Top three, all time, best Vader quotes:

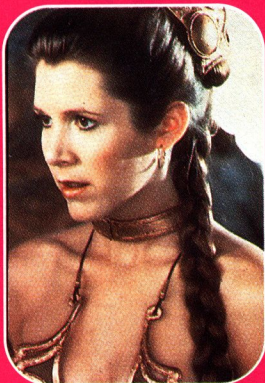
- "I hope for your sake, Admiral, you are right. The Emperor is not as forgiving as me."
Darth Vader, as he strolls through a heap of asphyxiated generals.
- "Your powers are weak, old man."
Darth psyches Kenobi out.
- "You have failed me for the last time, Admiral."
Mr Bronson from *Grange Hill* chokes on invisible hand, finally getting his come uppance for persecuting Zammo and Georgina.

2. "Carrie!" The youthful Luke Skywalker gets a little confused when he returns triumphant from the Death Star battle and embraces Princess Leia.

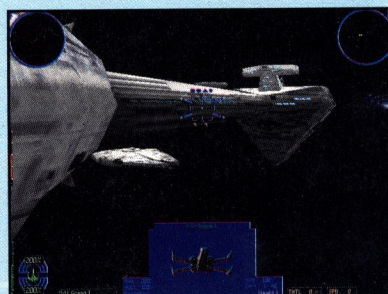
3. The noises. Whoever designed the sound effects for *Star Wars* should've been given an Oscar. How many memorable noises can you get out of one movie. The roar of passing TIE Fighters. The 'bzzzzzzttt-brrrrrrr' (for want of better onomatopoeia) of the light sabres. Vader's breathing. Blasters. Etc.

4. The music. What a score! Memorable, passionate and skill. John Williams? Have all my worldly belongings.

5. Yoda dying.



GAMERS HAVE BEEN ACHING, NAY throbbing, with desire for a network version of everybody's favourite space combat sim – *X-Wing*. It makes absolute sense. You can already imagine your 'clan' of rebels doing an attack run on a rival's Death Star. They'll be in Manhattan. You'll be in Walthamstow. You can already hear yourself saying, "He's on my tail! I can't shake him!" And as you spiral out of the sky to track an advanced TIE, he will invade your missile lock, and you will say – you will actually think to yourself – "The Force is strong in this one." *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* will





Release date: April

Star Wars TNG?

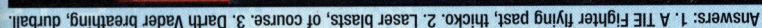
In a couple of months we will see the fruits of that labour. Until then we can but cold shower and dream over the gory details. For instance, graphically the whole thing is 'next generation'. It's packed with hi-res texture mapped-tastic graphics, with both X-Wings, TIEs, *and* the Millennium Falcon wandering around the screen like out-takes from the cut-scenes. Yes, they look that good. The whole thing's also going to be

A little quiz. Name these sound effects from their onomatopoeic examples (answers at foot of page):

1. "Waaaaarrrrruuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu"
2. Tyu-tyu
3. Turhhhhhhh-chu. Turhhhhh-chu.

While the whole game will work as a single-player, and an utter spoogeastic combat fest, Lazza and ver lads are working primarily on that much frowned upon activity in the network gaming universe – co-operative play.

"We want to offer some real story as to what's happening, some real reasons



Bad bits from the films

-

- 3.** "I cannot teach him." Oi! Yoda! Shut it. What do you know about being a Jedi? How can anybody be a Jedi master with Jim Henson's hand up their arse?

- 4.** The cantina. Possibly one of the only effects sequences which has aged badly. Looks like a really bad *Doctor Who* episode. Plus the other now crap effects. The stop-motion AT-AT walkers in *Empire* suddenly turning into full-motion Rubbish-Mobiles™ when they fall over (ditto for the smaller ones in *Jedi*). That piss-poor 'ice-monstie' on Hoth. The eyeball of the garbage monster in *Star Wars*. Fingers-crossed they'll fix them up in the new films.

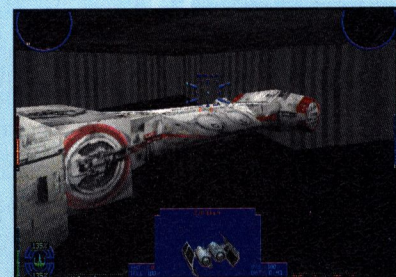
- 5. C3-P0. Oh *please* – a camp robot?** This civilisation has conquered the galaxy, can travel faster than light and has built a battlestation capable of destroying entire planets, but can they stop a twatty little droid mincing around like a Quentin?

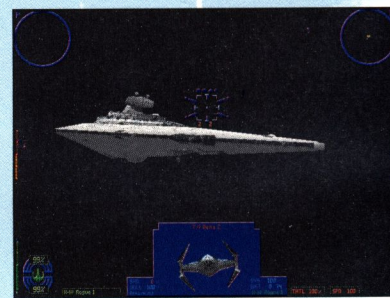
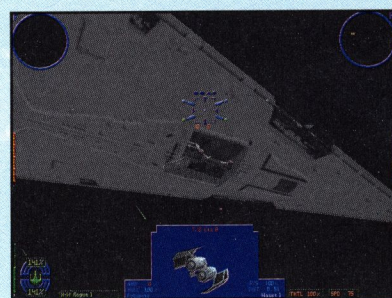
- 6. Plot inconsistencies.** How did Boba Fett know the Millennium Falcon was in the garbage? Why can't Storm Troopers actually shoot straight? How did Jaba know that thermal detonator holding bounty hunter ("Bousch") was Leia in disguise? Why does Han wear cavalry trousers? Why are there atmosphere and gravity in that asteroid monster in *Empire*? In *Star Wars*, why didn't they just blast the planet and then blot the moon, instead of waiting for the Rebel base to clear the planet? Hmmm? Answer those, Yoda.

- 7. Incest.** Yes, pre-*Brookside* there was saucy sibling sex. The case: okay, at the end of *Star Wars*, we can assume that Luke and Leia get it on. He rescues her and she gives him a big hug at the end and many moist glances. In *Empire*, she's cacking her pants that maybe he's frozen to death, and then when Han mooches around, she gives Lukey a big snog. Verdict: in between the two films, she was sleeping with him. Her own brother. Yuk. Then the tart gets it on with Luke's best mate (she was probably doing Chewbacca at one stage as well).

(Right) Detailed texture-mapping and a massive polygon count will mean that it all looks superb.

for being in the action,” says Larry. “We will offer a real variety of quick, short, very simple battles – everyone against each other. But one of the things that we’re really trying to emphasise is that





LucasArts are striving to get the balance right, and a variety of possible solutions present themselves. There will be Advanced TIE Fighters kicking around, as well as a bunch of earlier Rebel craft, such as the R-41 StarChaser and the T-Wing – and it's possible that Imperial players may get a squadron of TIES to pilot, switching between them if one goes down. Also subtle changes have been implemented in shield-recharge rates, flight dynamics and turning rates. However it ends up, though: "The game will be balanced."

And so we segue back to our *Star Wars* dreams. You can imagine 'hiding' your X-Wing squadron behind a convoy, waiting to ambush your mate's TIES. You can imagine nobly accelerating your damaged A-Wing to 'ramming speed' and piling into a Star Destroyer's shield generator, screaming: "She's gonna blow..." as your cockpit disintegrates around you. You can imagine escorting the Millennium Falcon on a Death Star run, through the tight catacombs at a zillion miles an hour. Oh God, it goes on. This game had better be good... **Z**

"we're not just facing everybody off to see who gets the most kills, but that they are actually team members who are trying to accomplish something together." So, one team may have a range of objectives – protect the shuttle, defend the convoy, capture the cargo, etc – while the other team will work to thwart them, not just by getting into dogfights, but by stalling, distracting and decoying.

The mission potential is somewhat awe-inspiring. *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* will support eight players, and may well reach 16. Internet play is a definite. "This will give us immense scope for entire multi-player campaigns." The idea is that multiple missions will be score-based, with a two-sided league system. You – as the Alliance – may lose two missions, but will have the opportunity to regroup and rethink and then cane it on the remainders, eventually coming out on top.

Another big consideration

Another big consideration is the TIE Fighter. Cool-looking and noisy it may be, the ultimate fighting machine, it ain't. A good X-Wing or A-Wing pilot could munch his way through 20-odd TIES without breaking stride. Nobody's going to want to be a poor old Imperial pilot without a shield. "True," say Lazza. "A player wants to be able to survive. He doesn't want to get out there and die in five seconds, but then he also wants to get a load of kills."

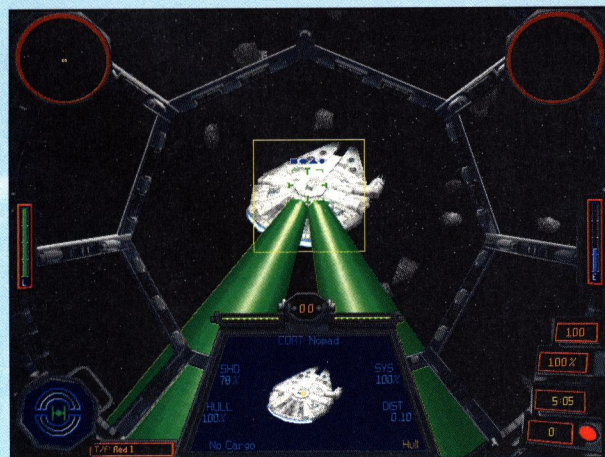
(Above) You won't just have to shoot X-Wings and TIE Fighters.

(Top right) God that looks gorgeous, doesn't it?

(Right) Bloody great ships cruising through space give a great feeling of depth, something *Origin* have yet to master.

(Below) Don't do that! Han and Leia might be inside!

(Right) "I have you now!"



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Not what you expected, but everything you wanted!



Blue
Byte

Normally intro jokes are a comic juxtaposition between the game's elements and the inadequacies of the journalist. **Paul Presley** takes a look at EIDOS' new alien invasion strategy game. Life should never be normal. Or predictable. (*So where's the joke? - Ed.*)

Conquest Earth

IN PRODUCTION



(Above right) A plucky Harrier Jump Jet takes out an alien, er, thingy.

(Above far right) The game opens with a very sexy intro movie. Starting in space and rapidly moving onto the surface of Earth.

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I EVER did when I first got an Internet account was to subscribe my e-mail address to the NASA Press Release Mailing List. Cool, I thought, actual NASA press releases. I'll get to hear about all sorts of top secret space stuff that only the President of the Americas gets to know - orbiting mind control lasers, satellite platforms with nukes pointed at the Russias, authentic UFO sightings by space shuttle pilots. It would be tops.

In truth NASA press releases are as dull as every other kind of press release in the world. In the past month alone I've learnt about various US schools that are being signed up to NASA's scientific educational programme, the various hirings and resignations of several astronauts, the names of the crews of future shuttle missions, the fact that the Hubble telescope keeps seeing pulsars and quasars that mean stunning new breakthroughs in scientific theories about how clouds are formed and how a race of silicon-based aliens from Jupiter have begun to invade Earth.



(Right) Gratuitous alien burning. Yee-haah!

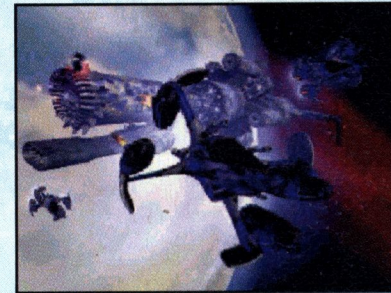


You what?

Okay, the last one was actually on a press release from EIDOS and concerns their new *Command & Conquer*-style strategy game, *Conquest Earth*. But let's face it, if aliens did ever invade NASA would have a lot more to worry about than letting the world's fluffy hoods know, don't you think?

In a nutshell (a walnut shell, peanuts are too small to be used as effective information carrying systems), when the Galileo probe entered Jupiter's atmosphere last year, it alerted us to the presence of a strange new lifeform in the gaseous giant. Unfortunately, it also alerted them to our presence and for reasons that are best known to them and Data Design (the game's programming team), they want to take over Earth.

Apparently, the Jupitians (as EIDOS insist on calling them. Jovians! Things



to do with Jupiter are called Jovian and for the rest of this Blueprint I shall refer to them thus, no matter how scornful a look the EIDOS PR rep throws at me) in the game are based on real scientific theories about how if another dominant, sentient lifeform were to exist in this great big universe, it would be silicon-based and come from Jupiter. Of course, scientific theories used to hold that the Earth was flat and if you sailed over the edge you'd be eaten by a giant space rabbit so I wouldn't put too much faith in it.

Being silicon in nature, it means that the Jovians (hah!) have a special feature that we plain old carbon-based lifeforms don't - the ability to morph. How speaking in a speeded-up high-pitched voice and existing in Tony Hart's pencil box will help in taking over the world is anyone's guess but there you go

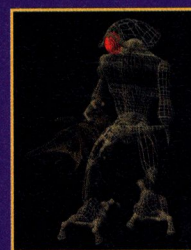


How to make an alien

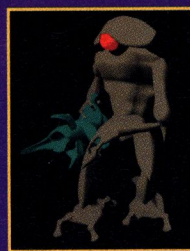
BEHIND THE SCENES



1 The aliens start off as an initial framework drawing.



2 This is then scanned and enhanced.



3 Next a skin is added and the ray-tracing worked out.



4 And finally the textured detail is added, the light-sourcing is added and an alien is born.



Product details

Developer: Data Design
Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
Telephone: 0181 780 2222
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: Late March

(What it actually means is that the Jovians are able to transform from one kind of unit to another, can fade into the background chameleon-style and are as hard as nails. Am I going to have to do everything for you? - Ed.).

Hardly fair, is it?

As always in these Invasion Earth scenarios, the odds are heavily stacked against the plucky old humans. Which is why it's something of a blessing that *Conquest Earth* allows you to play on either side of the fence. Be the heroic Earthlings, marshalling your meagre forces as you try to throw off the shackles of the evil invaders, or control the rather more impressive Jovians and their mighty war machines who are practically invincible and have odds of 7-4 on at William Hill to be victorious.

Of course, things aren't that hopeless for Earth. As the impressive (and lengthy) intro sequence shows, we're more than capable of putting up a fight, whether it's with *Babylon 5*-style space fighters or the more mundane military jets and helicopters. Plus, Data

Design have developed what they feel to be the most advanced form of computer AI yet seen in a game. Using neural networking as a basis (the processes involved in sending information around your brain in the form of electrical pulses), it essentially means that the computer can react to your moves in a very human way and your own troops all behave very realistically. The computer can be devious enough to set up traps and ambushes, but also vulnerable enough to fall for any unorthodox strategies you might come up with.

Woah, heavy

Don't worry about it. It's just a fancy way of saying if you screw up, it's your fault not the game's. Let me just round this all off by telling you about the presentation and graphical style, because they're great, it's all you really care about (be honest) and I would be remiss in my duties as a journalist writing a preview if I didn't. *Conquest Earth* looks absolutely fanrillious. Style-wise it borrows heavily from a lot of sources (*War Of The Worlds*, *Independence Day*, *Babylon 5*, *Predator*, to name but a few) and you'd be forgiven for saying, "Lawks, it's a bit C&C-ish, isn't it, Prez?" when you look at the in-game shots (even though I'd punch you in the mouth for being too familiar).

Data Design have gone overboard on the graphical innovation front in order to make things look smarter than a



(Left) The alien player gets his own screen layout. Very organic.

(Above) The screen can be viewed in and out at will, while useful remote cameras let you keep an eye on other areas of the map.

(Right) *Independence Day* anyone? Luckily, Jeff Goldblum doesn't make an appearance.



Saville Row suit. Lightwave 3D, alias rendering, 3Ds, fully textured terrains and light-sourcing all contribute to the looks, while fully three-dimensional sound effects that use Realtime Stereo Distancing and a full, dramatic musical score pump up the atmosphere and make you wish you'd received a pair of large speakers for Christmas instead of that Harry Enfield video.

All in all, a potentially superb strategy game awaits, by Jove (you just had to sneak that one in, eh? - Ed.). The only thing we need now is a release date and a playable version to review. Soon, baby, soon. Z

(Below left) The mix of futuristic alien technology versus conventional Earth military hardware makes for an interesting challenge.

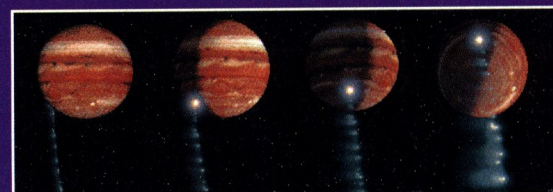


Jupiter - The Gas Giant

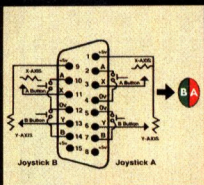
In December 1995, astronomers and scientists around the world saw the final results of one of the most advanced space missions the Earth had undertaken since a man called Buzz said, "Can't I go first, Neil?" After a lengthy journey across the infinite blackness of space, NASA's Galileo probe started its kamikaze dive into the atmosphere of the planet Jupiter, where the dense pressures of the different gases that make up the planet would crush it like a beetle.

Earlier, in July 1994, Jupiter was once again the subject of global attention as it played host to a string of small (relatively) comet fragments. The Shoemaker-Levy Comet bombarded the gas giant, forever changing its appearance.

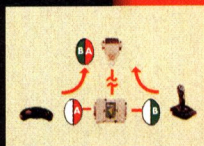
What conclusions could we draw from all these galactic incidents? First, space is constantly surprising us, always offering new wonders and expanding our scientific horizons. Second, Jupiter is an attention-seeking bastard.



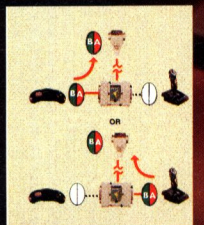
Jupiter during the Shoemaker-Levy impact. Smug git.



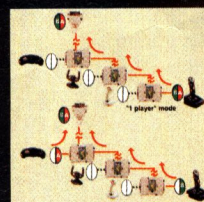
Although most PCs have only one game port the design actually supports two joysticks (A & B). Advanced sticks that sport four buttons, throttle and rudder controls or coolie caps, make use of the second joystick (B) controls. When two sticks are connected only two fire buttons per stick are available.



In two player mode, both joysticks can be activated at the same time for two-player games. However, due to the design of the IBM joystick port, the advanced functions of the joysticks are not supported.



Select single player mode and the AlfaTwin allows you to switch between two joysticks. In this mode, all the functions of the stick are supported. To select your stick, simply press the fire button of the controller you wish to use.



You can cascade up to three AlfaTwins together. This allows four different joysticks to be connected simultaneously. Moreover, the six foot long cable brings the AlfaTwin round to the front of your desk, freeing you from the hassle of plugging/unplugging your joystick from the back of the computer.

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Liverpool
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Tel: 0181 424 0635

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Tel: 01482 225030
Ipswich
Tel: 01473 287092
Lakeside
Tel: 01708 863587

Oxford Street
London
Tel: 0171 493 3735
Luton
Tel: 01582 28638

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telephone 0181 900 9291

Leading joystick manufacturer says:

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Computer --- AlfaTwin
Gravis Phoenix
Gravis GrlP

"This all works without having to pull out all the cables, einfach wunderbar! I cannot say anything else except congratulations with a very nice product."

Edu Oskam, Technical Support Specialist
(Gravis Europe/Holland)

International Press comment on AlfaTwin:

England
PC Format
"This is an auto-switch and two-player adapter for any two 15-pin controllers. In auto-switch mode all the advanced controls, such as hats, are available. It costs less than 20 pounds."
(Gold-award, September 1996)

CD ROM Today
"There is no need to install drivers or fiddle around inside your machine - it is almost too simple...AlfaTwin does its

job and adds a whole new dimension to gaming. Very useful..."
(Best Buy, June 1995)

PC Review
"As well as helping you enjoy unbridled two player action you can plug in two different styles of joystick and cunningly flip between them."
(September 1996.)

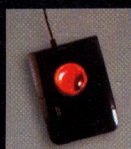
Germany
PC-Player
"One of the most annoying problems of the PCs is finally solved... the 40 Mark device fulfills so many functions, that you cannot live without it after only a few minutes of use."
(July 1996)

PC Action
"An intelligent joystick-adapter for two players... outstanding useability, a very good price-performance ratio"
(August 1996)

PC-Speil
"The new magic word for two-player games is AlfaTwin"
(June 1996)

Japan
DOS/V
"For the PC, to become a popular game hardware... it is also indispensable to be played with two players. It is no fun to play with pad vs keyboard. Now we can use AlfaTwin..."
(March 1996)

Other Alfa Data Products



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AlfaData Head Office

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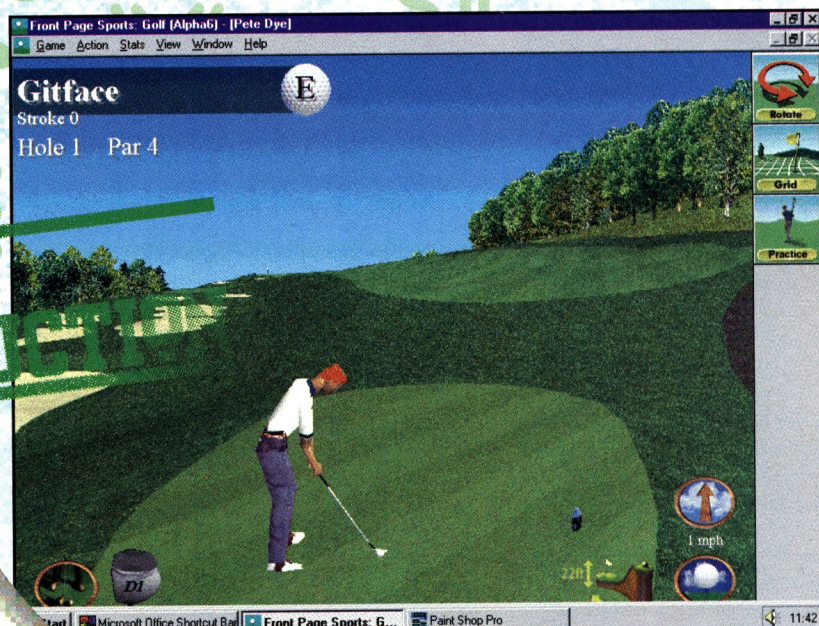
"One of the most annoying problems of PC gaming has finally been solved" PC Player 7/96

Front Page Sports: Golf

Sierra are currently working on a new golf simulation that might just present a challenge to the established golfing classics *PGA* and *Links*. **Jeremy Wells** went to practise his wrist action and succeeded in knocking over three cups of coffee.

WHEN IT COMES TO GOLF GAMES people generally fall into two camps: those who love being wrapped up in the graphical lushness of EA Sports' *PGA* series, and those who revel in the graphical splendour and realism of *Links*. Whether you're a fan of the sport itself (in other words, you actually dress up in ridiculous trousers and prance about finely cut turf in all weathers) or your pitch and putting ability is strictly limited to a click of the mouse, very much determines which camp you fall into.

The *Links* and *PGA* series, for all their gloss and ease of use, are rather limited by their common control method. Although the developers have tried to make the gameplay as varied and



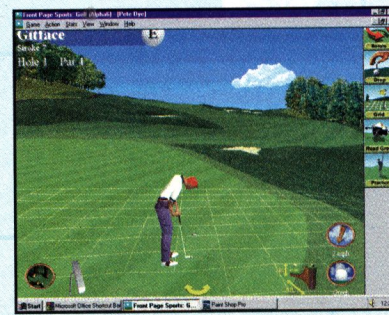
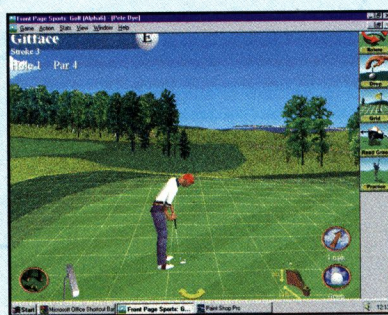
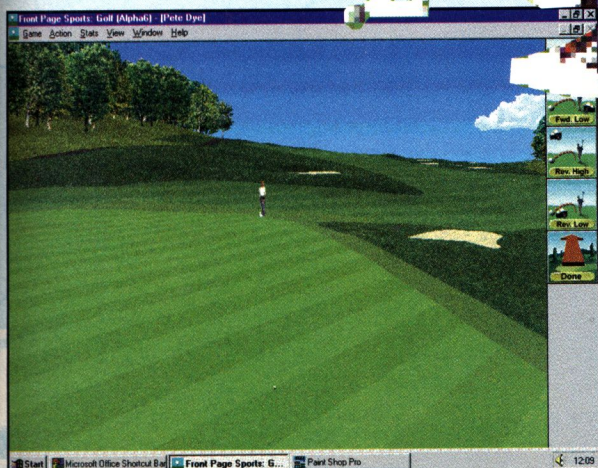
interesting as possible, when it comes down to it, a round of either game involves no more than double-clicking the left mouse button 70-odd times (if you're any good, that is). Whilst the addition of varying wind, green speeds and bunkers makes the courses more interesting, they're really only minor diversions to what is a very rigid formula of gameplay. Sure, you can play Match, Skins and Stroke – but essentially it's the same jacket with different buttons.

As anyone who's ever picked up a club and attempted to hit a ball more than 40 yards will tell you, golf is not simply a matter of going through the motions stroke after stroke, hole after hole (unless you're a pro, that is – or a robotic German). Every stroke presents a new challenge as far as grip, stance and, most importantly, the swing are concerned. Getting any kind of consistency is bloody hard work, and

that's what Vance Cook, producer and designer of the game, is ultimately trying to re-create: "We want golfers to feel like they're actually playing the game, not just watching it, and we've built plenty of new features into *FPS: Golf* in an effort to make this happen. We want it to be as realistic as possible."

The missing Links

When it comes to getting things right, Cook knows his golf games. He's one of the original team that worked on the seminal *Links 386*, and he's spent hours with his development team studying golf ball dynamics to perfectly recreate the flight, roll, bounce and effect of every dip and bump of the greens. What really puts *Front Page Sports: Golf* in a different league from *PGA* and *Links* is the innovative 'golf-swing' technique that manages to remove that predictable click-click-click swing element that makes other golf games so limited. Instead of simply clicking the mouse to start and complete the swing, *FPS: Golf* requires players to actually glide the mouse back, simulating their backswing, and then thrust it forward for follow-through, giving a far greater



Product details

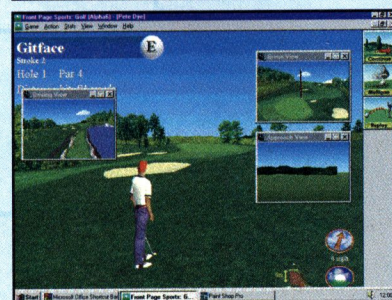
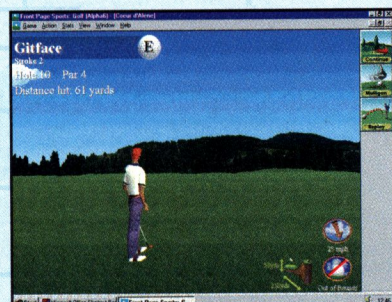
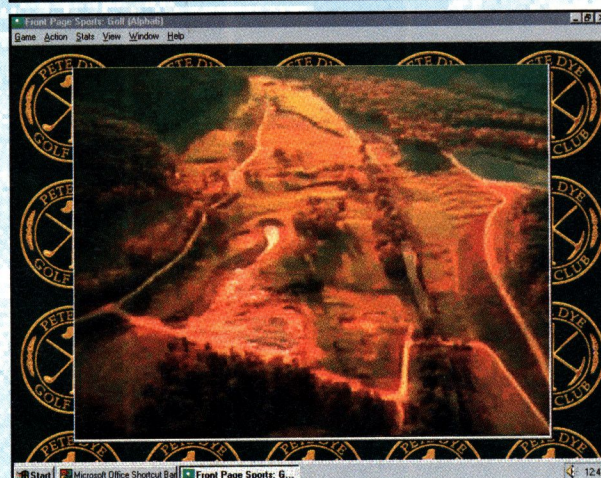
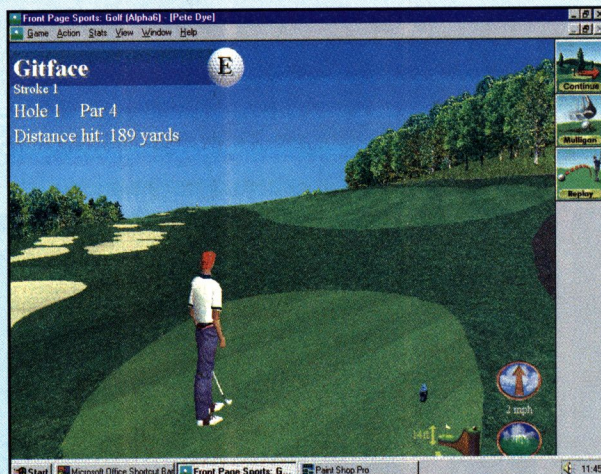
Developer: Sierra On-Line
Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Telephone: 0118 920 9100
e-mail: www.sierra.com
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: April

level of control and, at the same time, much greater room for error, just like real golf. With practice (and it does take quite a while to get used to), players will be able to use this new swing technique to accurately execute a variety of shots, including draws, fades, chips, and pitch and runs.

It might seem a little alien at first, but the fact that you don't have to run through numerous menus and icons means that once you've got the hang of it, it's actually pretty speedy (in theory, at least). If you want to chip the ball onto the green you simply alter your swing and hold down a key to give the ball some backspin. It's as simple and hands-on as that. Just one thing, however. Make sure you clear your desk of hot beverages before you start swinging, or the contents will probably end up over the desk as you thrash about with the mouse. Failing that, invest in some asbestos trousers. Checked, of course.

Optional extras

As well as the usual multi-player head-to-head option, you'll be able to play



against players around the world over a modem and against up to 255(!) other golfers over a LAN. Though whether you can find a network that can cope, that's manned by people willing to wait approximately six hours for their turn to come round, is anyone's guess. You're probably better off busying yourself with the 13 different types of play on offer (Stroke, Match, Skins, Four-ball, Scramble, Greensome, Bloodsome (!) and so on) and making yourself familiar with the intricacies of the two 'real' courses that will come with the game, 'The Prince in Kauai', Hawaii and the 'Pete Dye Golf Club' in Bridport, West Virginia. Both courses will be presented in meticulous detail and feature multiple course conditions such as wind speed and direction, and differing length and dampness of the grass, so you'll have to adjust your swing and tactics accordingly if you're to keep below par.

As far as player options go, the players are constructed from texture-mapped polygons, and you get the usual male/female, skin, hair, clothes set-up options so you can customise your on-screen alter ego before he/she swings her way though the hi-res course in real-time 3D.

The Need For Speed

Thanks to the likes of PGA and Links, people pretty much expect the in-game graphics in golf games to be nothing less than awesome, and although it

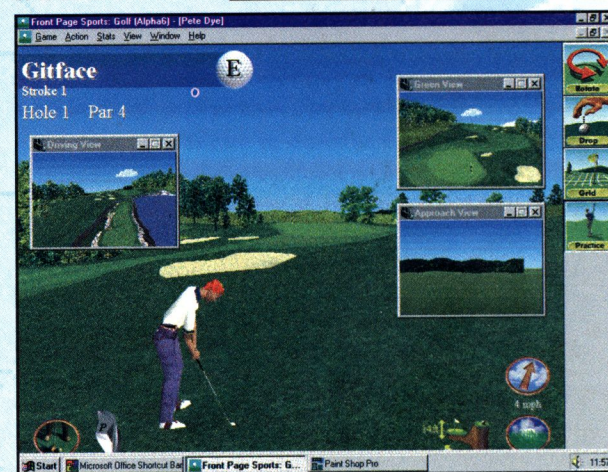
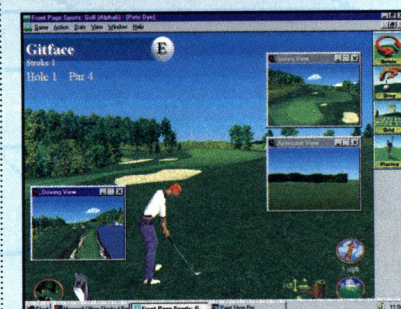
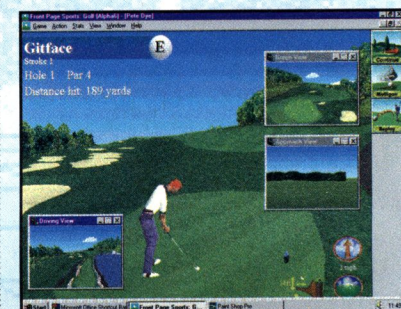
(Top) "What's that farting noise coming from those trees over there?" pondered Simon.

(Above) The game will sport two 'real' courses, each with their very own FMV chunks to show you what they actually look like.

(Right and below) The mouse-driven interface gives you a lot of control, though at present putting is pretty tricky. This will be sorted out later.

looks a little flat (something PGA suffers from), the courses in FPS: Golf don't disappoint. The problem with having such a detailed environment is the refresh speed. There's nothing worse than making your shot and then waiting for 30-odd seconds while the screen re-draws your new position. At the moment, FPS: Golf is incredibly slow at re-drawing the course, and I mean 'go and make a cup of tea, service the car and re-watch all of Twin Peaks on video again' slow. Sierra stress that the version we saw is a very early alpha and that the final product will be a lot quicker. If FPS: Golf is going to be half-way playable, it will need to be.

Similarly, the mouse swing will need tweaking a bit. At the moment, it's a little twitchy and no matter how quickly you move your club (via the mouse), it seems to accelerate very quickly as soon as you come to that crucial about-to-strike-the-ball stage. Still, it's early days yet (the game's not due out 'til April) and if Cook's got anything to do with it, Sierra should have a pretty smart golf game on their hands that will give the likes of the established PGA and Links a good run for their money. **Z**



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Airwarrior II



"Blimey, guv'nor, them graphics look a bit of a two and eight. This a joke, izzit?"
Duncan MacDonald assures the chirpy cockney that there's a valid reason for *Airwarrior II*'s visual minimalism. Read on...

(Above right) Just three of your 110, yes, count 'em, 110 possible on-line enemies. Oo-er!

(Below and centre) Nitpickers to the fore – but aren't those headphones and that fire extinguisher (centre pic, bottom left corner) just a teensy weensy bit on the modern side?

AIRWARRIOR II, AS YOU'LL HAVE cleverly worked out from its suffix, is a sequel. I managed to work that one out myself, too, while sitting in the *Zone* office watching Marcus from Interactive Magic desperately trying to locate and download a necessary file which would allow the slightly unfinished game to actually function.

"Ah, there it is," he said.

A few mouse clicks later and the intro sequence began.

"Watch this," he said. "It's good."

"I know," I replied, "I saw it last

night, at home."

"Oh, I thought you couldn't get it working."

I explained that I'd had no problems with the intro sequence, or indeed with any of the numerous options screens, but only with the game itself.

"It locked up?"

It most certainly did, I told him. It wasn't a big deal or anything, let me quickly add for the record, as this sort of stuff always happens with early beta versions. The point was, though, that at this point in time I had no idea at all as to what *Airwarrior II*'s in-game bits looked like.

Shock horror...

Having witnessed the intro sequence for a second time, I watched Marcus zap through the options screens. Ah! I knew

them well by now. They were like old friends. Or enemies, actually, seeing as how I'd been through them myself, a squillion times before.

"Look, this is a nice touch," said Marcus, clicking gaily on the little sheep icon.

"I know," I said, as it went 'baaaaa' and the credits box popped up.

"Let's do a mission then," said Marcus.

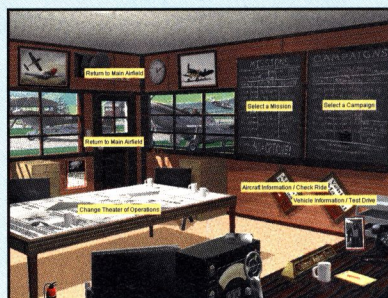
Hooray!

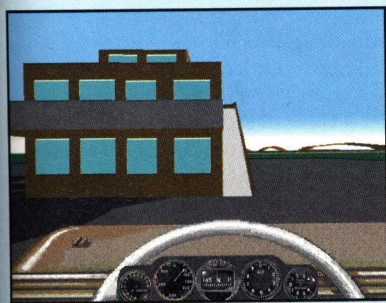
"One thing though," he said.

"What?"

"Not all the aircraft interiors have been finished yet. In the final build they'll all be accurately mapped against their real life counterparts, but at the moment it's all a bit generic."

Adding that the Spitfire was one that had been completed,





he clicked on a Spitfire mission and we were finally away. Yippee! Cue the loading screen, and massive expectation on my part.

But then the monitor was filled with a moving picture which, obviously, looks like the in-game screenshots on these pages. Yikes! Know what I mean? I think I just said "Um..." Or words to that effect, anyway. Ignoring the cockpit bitmaps, I was focusing solely on the outside polygon world, and wept inwardly as a result.

"What do you think?" said Marcus.

"Um, er, wha... wha... what's the difference between this and the prequel?" I asked.

"The graphics in the last one were shit," he replied.

You can imagine what I was thinking.

Slowly brought up to speed...

"Oh, I thought you knew," said Marcus, a little later.



"No, I didn't realise. So this isn't, strictly speaking, a one-player game?"

"No. Er, yes. Well, it is and it isn't. You can play it on your own if you like, and it's a good idea to do so to get the hang of the different planes, but the meat of *Airwarrior II* is the fact that you can join in a mass battle."

"What, like... a war?"

"Precisely."

"How many people? Sixteen on a network or something?"

"No, 110 per arena, on-line."

AAah! The penny had finally dropped. With the central *Airwarrior* server needing to pass ordnance and debris information between 110 different homes in different countries yet still keep the frame rates up, I semi-understood why the ground detail was, er crap.

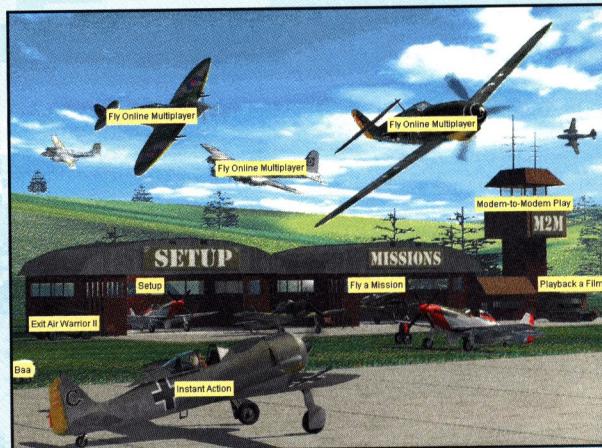
"The flight models are superb," said Marcus, handing me the joystick. "Go on, have a go."

I instantly put the Spitfire into a stalling spin.

"It's not a jet, you know," he said. Smartarse.

Better and better...

Marcus stuck *Airwarrior II* into Multiplay Mode (you need to be on AOL or CompuServe) and... well, what can I say? How about 'wow'? The barren ground didn't matter a jot now: you could see where it was and that's all you needed. Meanwhile, a plane, just a pixel at



(Above) Click on the sheep, bottom left corner, and it'll go 'baa' and give you the credits. Better than giving you scrapie or BSE, I suppose...

(Top left) As the multi-player thing, there'll be 100 one-player missions to practice on.

present, was approaching, head on.

"Can I shoot him?"

"No, you'd better not," said Marcus, "he's on your side."

I still wanted to shoot him, but had to delay going into my 'shoot the bastards down' mode as Marcus explained how seriously the blokes who use this system take things: the rules are that if you shoot at (and hit) someone on your own side (even if it's by accident) you get dumped by the server and can't log on again for 24 hours.

Sad bastards. Still, eh? And you can send messages to one another à la *Quake*. And the closure rates are cool... the plane Marcus wouldn't let me shoot down grew alarmingly in size over about three seconds and then - woosh - was behind. Oh for a padlock view. Oh for a 110-plane dogfight.

And on and on...

As well as the WWII scenario, there's also going to be a First World War one (that'll be a hoot), and the Korean war too (with migs and Sabres). Also, and bizarrely, you can opt for control of a ground vehicle. Tank anyone? Hang around near runways taking potshots at the planes trying to land? Then there's the jeep, and the Flakpanzer. Quite why anyone would go for 'the truck' I can't say, but there's nowt so queer as folk, so I daresay somebody will.

Oh, and did I mention that several people can actually crew one aircraft? Like the Flying Fortress, for example? Navigator? Co-pilot? Bombadier? Rear gunner? In fact, I think that I'll leave you with a line from the game's

README.TXT file...

(11) The lower gunner killed on landing bug has been corrected.

Ho, ho! Z

Product details

Developer: I-Magic

Publisher: I-Magic

Telephone: 01344 409399

e-mail: <http://www.imagicgames.com>

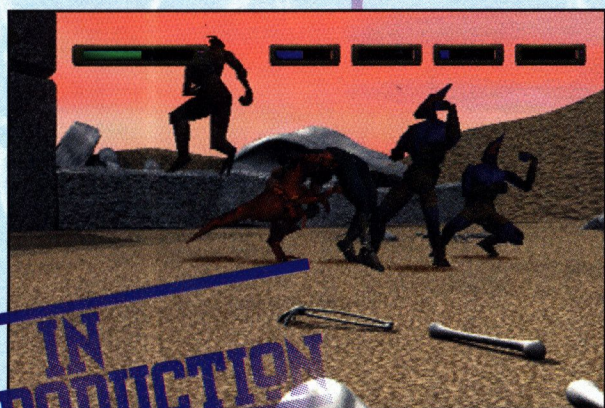
Format: CD-ROM

Release date: April

Various kinds of in-cockpit view are available: (far left) Lucy In The... er, gulp; (centre) Got that Fokker in my sights; and (right) What a gorgeous day to pretend you're Richard Branson...

Every now and then a game title comes along that's so lacking in opportunities for puns, crap word-play, or low-level humorous coincidence stories, that even someone as desperate as **Patrick McCarthy** can't think what to do with it in an introduction.

Perfect Weapon



IN PRODUCTION

(Above centre) Terry couldn't help but wonder whether he'd fallen for the old Hide-and-Seek joke again.

Product details

Developer: Gray Matter

Publisher: American Software/Electronic Arts

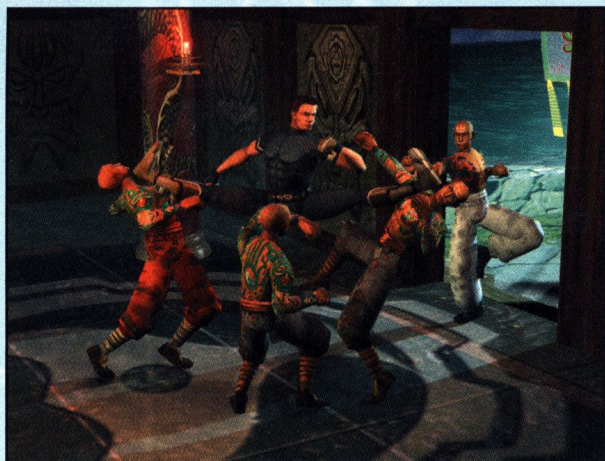
Telephone: 01753 549442

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: Out now

(Below) Resting his feet on the faces of two bystanders, our hero utilises the painfully effective groin-to-the-elbow blow and sends his attacker (front) reeling.

(Below right) A typically thoughtful debate in the House of Commons shows why the British Parliament is so highly thought of around the world.



overlord (sometimes from the Deep, and usually with more than the requisite number of limbs), who appears in a puff of foul-smelling smoke, anxious to display his skill at fisticuffs; and, most importantly, a seriously rich backer whips out his wedge to sponsor the action and provide the exotic locations. Oh, and there's usually a range of bizarre creatures to contend with, who look like Natterjack Toads that work out. (We've had complaints from people with a morbid fear of Natterjack Toads about this, but there's nothing we can do, so stop writing, alright?)

Who wants to be a millionaire?

In real life, seriously rich people are pretty bloody weird. Having so much money that they'll never have to work again isn't enough for the huge egos that made them that rich in the first place: they want to be loved, too. So instead of bugging off to some tropical island hideaway and spending their lives in a sun-, alcohol- and drug-induced daze, they try to make people love them. There are three traditional ways to do this. They may buy a football team, convincing themselves that the fans' love for the team is in fact a love for themselves. They might buy several newspapers and convince themselves



that government ministers love attending their dinner parties and talking desultorily about the state of the peanut sweepings industry. Or they might opt for the third, and probably the cheapest, method, and get their quota of adoration by consorting with Thai prostitutes.

But none of these solutions is nearly as weird as the ageing multi-millionaire in the average beat 'em up, who shrugs aside such trivial pastimes and hosts a martial arts competition instead. And usually ends up donning a pair of gaudy pyjamas and taking on the winner, too. *Perfect Weapon* has many things in common with the traditional beat 'em up. For a start, there's an evil Overlord from Outer Space. This Overlord owns five planets, the rent from which is always handy to fall back on if his job presenting a daytime cookery and





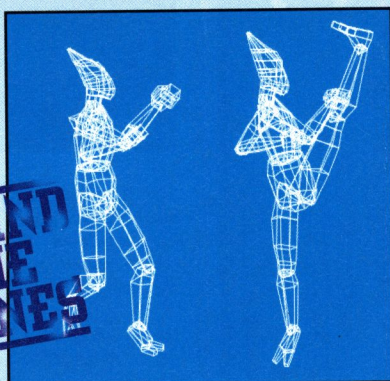
gardening programme falls through. And his hobby is travelling around the universe, kidnapping the most impressive physical species wherever he finds them (that's us out, then), whisking them back to one of his planets and setting them against each other in fights to the death. (He used to collect British Railway Passenger Timetables, but he ran out of space in his bedroom.) Oh, and in a manner reminiscent of the old-fashioned stroll-along beat 'em up, there's a good, old-fashioned hero.

The name's Hunter – Blake Hunter

You are a Blake hunter – a man who's dedicated his life to tracking down and eradicating the former Inspector from *On The Buses*. (Stop being silly – Ed.) Alright, then. You are Blake Hunter, the top agent in the Earth Defence Force, world champion martial artist, holder of the Northern Hemisphere record for dry Martini consumption in an hour (uncoached), and European Misogynist Championships Semi-Finalist (lost on penalties after extra time). (That's better – Ed.) You have been kidnapped by the aforementioned evil Overlord. But then you were probably expecting me to say that.

As Blake, you will be faced with the traditional seemingly impossible task. (Note: if you're thinking of designing a beat 'em up, the task *must* only be seemingly impossible, because 1) there's probably some brain-dead kid out there with the reflexes of a humming bird who can finish it in one go, 2) there's an

BEHIND THE SCENES



Easy setting and 3) if it turns out to be properly impossible, no-one will buy it.) The task involves walking across rice paper without leaving a footprint, then picking a boiling kettle up with your forearms, so that 'Russell Hobbs' is printed backwards on them forever more, then pursuing a life of peace, pausing only to break a few cowboys' kneecaps at the end of every episode. Oops, wrong press release. The task is to make your way between locations, kicking the shit out of anything that moves. (And you can keep kicking after it's stopped moving, if you want.)

How many hostile worlds?

There will be five hostile worlds to fight your way through, providing 1300 (count 'em) 3D locations to explore, all of which look more attractive than Frank Carson in a rubber cat-suit...



(Above left) Exclusive! The unnatural scenes of miscegenous love they tried to ban!

(Right) See what happens when you let your skeleton out of the closet?

(Left) Diagram demonstrating how Camilla Parker-Bowles managed to win her man against seemingly impossible odds.



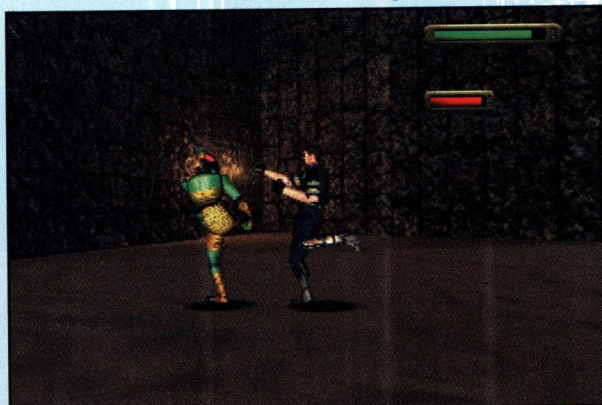
That doesn't sound right, does it? Oh, just insert a name yourself. They'll be presented to you in an intelligent camera angle style (sort of like *Alone In The Dark*).

Anyway, there are 20 different impressively powerful life forms to fight against – none of which will be a Natterjack Toad (I've checked, so good news there). Thanks to a new system called Behavioural Artificial



(Below) A small thermonuclear device secreted in the heel of his boot did wonders for Gary's fighting performance.

Intelligence, they'll be able to attack you in groups of four at a time, which is less good news. Even worse – or even better if you're a card-carrying masochist – the further you get into the game, the smarter they get, identifying your moves and fighting co-operatively to kick you to death. But there will be over 100 realistic martial arts moves with which you can pummel their noses (if they have any). This is a major departure from the stroll-along beat 'em up, which normally provided three. As well as the all-consuming violence, there will be adventure, exploration and inventory management elements. So you might even have to think a bit (if you can take your eye off the backgrounds). We'll review it when we get a finished version. **Z**



Magic: The Gathering BattleMage

Not the long-awaited MicroProse version, but Acclaim's action-based version of the classic card game. **Paul Presley** wiggles his fingers and becomes the Sorcerer's Apprentice.



(Left) The actual duels take place in various landscapes, from snowy wastes to urban city centres.

(Above) Ooh, who rubbed his lamp the wrong way?

Product details

Developer: Acclaim

Publisher: Acclaim

Telephone: 0171 344 5000

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: March

WELL, IT SEEMS AS IF THE WHOLE world has gone quite literally *Magic* mad just lately (*Has it?* - Ed.) No, not really. I'm just trying to drum up a wee bit o' interest to hook the reader in at the start. In actual fact, it seems as if the initial *Magic/Trading Card Game* phenomenon has died down a little over the past few months. Perhaps it's the ever-increasing number of delays that has surrounded the MicroProse incarnation of *Magic* on computer, perhaps it's just the novelty factor wearing off, or perhaps it's a secret plot by the world's software

houses to drive all knowledge of rival gaming pastimes out of our minds with secret brainwashing lasers housed in orbiting satellites (sorry, a little bit too much Illuminati).

Anyhow, while we all sit twiddling our spell-casting thumbs, waiting for Sid Meier and co. to come up trumps, Acclaim have rather sneakily crept under the door and put together their own version of the fantasy card game. *BattleMage* is the name of the new version and the main difference between the two games is that it's all in real-time.



(Left) Your spell libraries are fully customisable, allowing you to adopt any kind of strategy you like.

Away with strategy

Acclaim have attempted to capture the feel of what life in the world of *Magic* is like, rather than trying to faithfully recreate the rules of the game. To this end, they've developed a brand new storyline to help capture the mood. (If you could just imagine that my voice has lost its light, nasal tinge at this point and has developed into a much deeper, more booming, James Earl Jones-like timbre, this next paragraph will work much better.)

In the world of Dominia, where the power of magic reigns supreme, the continent of Corondor has become the focal point for the plans of an evil and powerful magician. Intent on conquering the land and eliminating all competition to his dominion, the mighty Ravidel has summoned six of the most powerful planeswalkers to do battle. Spells will fly, creatures will fight and eventually, when only one remains, Ravidel will sweep the tired victor from his path and conquer all.

So that's where you come in (I'm back in my normal voice now). You get to be one of the six planeswalkers as you battle across Corondor, hoping to conquer the land and fend off your enemies. This is done in the traditional *Magic* style - duelling with cards. The difference here is that each spell is depicted graphically. Cast a fireball and you'll see a fireball. Summon a Hurloon



Minotaur and a Hurloon Minotaur will stomp onto the screen (whatever the blundering hell a Hurloon Minotaur is).

Deal thy cards

Like the MicroProse version, there's the choice of two ways to play *Battle Mage*: a long-term campaign which depicts the storyline mentioned above, or a single one-on-one duel between you and either a computer or human opponent playing over a network or the Internet. Also capturing the trading flavour of the card game is the ability to create your own custom decks out of over 200 of the cards available in the fourth edition and *Mirage* expansion packs. These decks can be saved onto disk and taken from one machine to another, giving the multi-player side of the game that real schoolyard conkers feel. As the card game releases new expansion packs (something that seems to happen every other week), so Acclaim will keep things up to date by releasing add-on disks.

Unlike the MicroProse version, that's where the card influences seem to end. The actual duelling mechanics have replaced all the gaming rules with real-time strategy action controls. Once you take to the field of battle, you have to start conjuring up your forces and send them off to battle. You still have a hand of seven spells at a time, but now you're up against the clock as they get replaced every 30 seconds or so. Thus you have to really get to know what your various spells can do quickly in order to react to the pressures of time and the actions of your enemy.

What has been retained is the rich atmosphere of the card game and the world of Dominia. *Battle Mage* is replete with beautiful presentation. All the

(Above) Once summoned, your creatures are controlled in a *Command & Conquer* style.

(Above right) The six planeswalkers each specialise in different kinds of magic.



artwork of the cards has been faithfully reproduced, and the story and elements of *Magic* are told in a number of gloriously animated sequences.

The big question

Does *Battle Mage* faithfully reproduce the excitement, addictiveness and glamour of playing *Magic* (*Glamour?* - Ed.)? Although it's hard to say (the version I saw still had quite a few features to be implemented), the early

impressions are that Acclaim have managed to capture what it feels like to play *Magic* rather than accurately capturing an actual game of *Magic*. So while MicroProse's version should be welcomed warmly by *Magic* players across the land, Acclaim have a better chance of attracting non-Magicians to their stall, allowing them to take that first, vital step into a magical world of flexible card, coloured counters and fluffy hoods. **Z**



Acclaim vs MicroProse

So what are the main differences between the two computer versions of *Magic*? In a nutshell, Acclaim's version has been designed to be more of an action-based interpretation of the world of *Magic*. Real-time combat, spells represented by graphics instead of cards, adventuring in the fictional world of Dominia, etc. MicroProse's effort is more akin to a chess simulator - a faithful reincarnation of the actual card game, adhering to all the rules and including all the elements needed to play *Magic*. A typical conversation between players of the two versions would run along these lines:

Acclaim Player: Hark, friend! My name is Shandalorian and I command the power of red magic in my quest to conquer the realms of magic. Ho!

MicroProse Player: No you're not. You're Kevin Spottiswode of Grimsby and you're still in the fifth form of your local secondary school where you're studying Woodwork.

Acclaim Player: At least I have the power of my imagination to transport my dreams above the humdrum existence of everyday life. Whereas you are mired in rules and dream only of cold, grey numbers.

MicroProse Player: But my knowledge of strategy can only improve my path through life's myriad challenges whereas you will always be nothing but a dreamer, stuck in imaginary worlds and unable to deal with real life.

Acclaim Player: Go suck on a fireball.

MicroProse Player: Twat.

So which camp do you fall into? Decide quickly as both versions will soon be available and fighting for space on your hard drive.



Acclaim's version of *Magic*...



...and MicroProse's version. Spot the difference.



(Below) Attack of the Ray Harryhausens.

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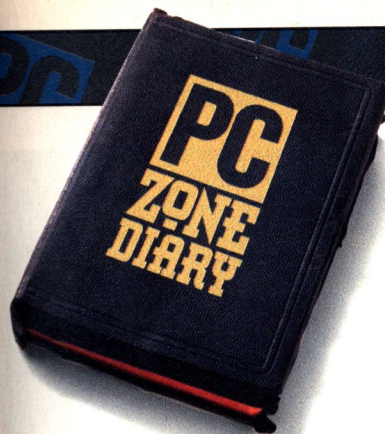
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Unreal Part One



We spent the whole of 1996 spooging over *Quake* until it hurt. Barely have our pleasure prunes recovered than another superlative 3D shooter comes our way. **David McCandless** begins our four-part diary of Epic MegaGames' *Unreal*, the game they're already calling: 'Vorde Handclamst!' (in Sweden).



PICTURE THE SCENE, WILL YOU: A programmer's 'hut' somewhere cold in Canada where it is so huge and sparsely populated that there's over 600 square kilometres of territory per Canadian. Arch emperor high master ninja coder Tim Sweeney (for it is he) is hunched over a glowing monitor, upon which plays the latest incarnation of his famed 'engine' - a

glossy 3D swivelling rotating first-person perspective affair not un-immediately reminiscent of a certain game beginning with 'q' but with all manner of bells, whistles,

effects, dancing girls, casinos, and 24-hour garages fitted on.

Alongside Jim squats James Schmalz, the game's executive producer and oft programmer, who's been nurturing the game since the work started 18 months ago. Why, but the boys seem to be having a heated discussion about something. Let's turn the volume up...

"...No, I say we call it 'Juicy'."

"Juicy? Juicy? How can you call a first-person sci-fi shooter, 'Juicy'?"

"I think it has a certain ring to it. Alright, what about... er... 'Richter Scale'?"

"Nah, too *Quake-y*."

"Okay then, 'Pillow Fight'."

"What?"

"Joke. Er, 'Emperor Executor 3D'?"

"Too much like *Duke Nukem*."

"What about 'Girth'?"

"Girth?"

"It's what matters."

"Hmmm, I prefer 'Blades Of Arachnon'."

"The Thong Of Thorgandia'."

"Nah, we should call it 'Girth 3D'."

By-line: 'Have it where it matters.'"

"But it has a female protagonist..."

"Well, that can be swapped around."

Youthful coffee-maker minion enters room, takes one look at the next-generation engine sashaying across the



(Left) So it's a first-person *Quake*-like doofer, but the wall-paper's much nicer. So don't gore it up, okay?

(Above) Looks like you've wandered into a giant sundial.

Product details

Developer: Epic MegaGames

Publisher: GT Interactive

Telephone: 0171 258 3791

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: May

screen, and says: "Woah, that engine, man, it's unreal."

Et cetera et cetera.

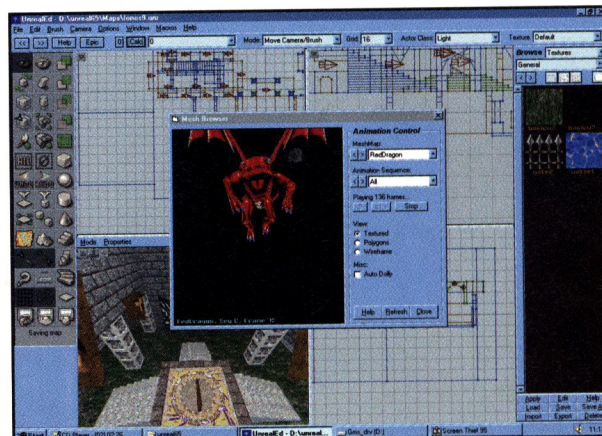
The game

Unreal was for a while an 'engine without a game'. 'More like Unfinished' went the (hilarious) joke. But on first look, as engines go, this one is definitely what Clarkson would describe as 'so smooth I'm going to take the dashboard home and sleep with it'.

It is, of course, exceedingly *Quake*-like, but this is kind of inevitable. *Quake* is

(Left) Breakfast will be a nightmare when the Honey Monster gets toolled up.

(Below) Okay, let's place a nasty red flying thingy right there...





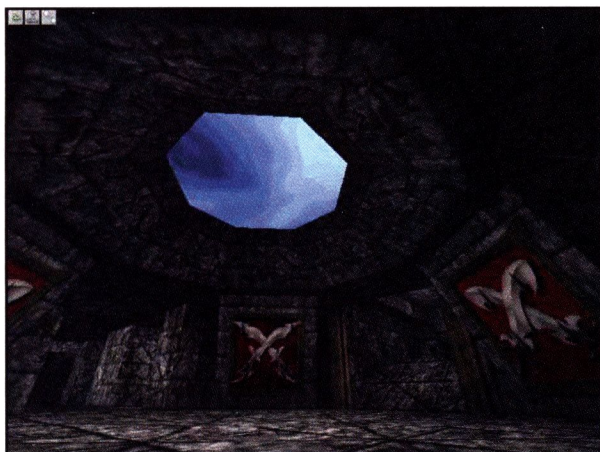
“exceedingly life-like, so it follows that any 3D-style game will look like *Quake*. Setting-wise, however, *Unreal* has the same gloomy corridors leading to lugubrious caverns, treacherous walkways, lava pits, moats and limescale walls. Dark scary catacombs rub shoulders with over-lit arenas. Spiral staircases lead to rooftops. Rooftops lead to cliff faces. And cliff faces – should you lose your footing – lead to horribly spikey death pits. The action is all first-person, with your weapon bobbing familiarly in front of you, and a meaty toolbar of shield, ammo and health statistics below. *Unreal*’s engine, however, is deemed to be ‘next generation’. That is, like the *Star Trek* crew – fresher, glossier and better lit (and without a fat, balding goblin called Shatner). The engine takes the rough elements of its predecessor and then soups them up with all manner of new features.

The first innovation pops up when you bump Helen Keller-like into a wall.



Multi-player network play

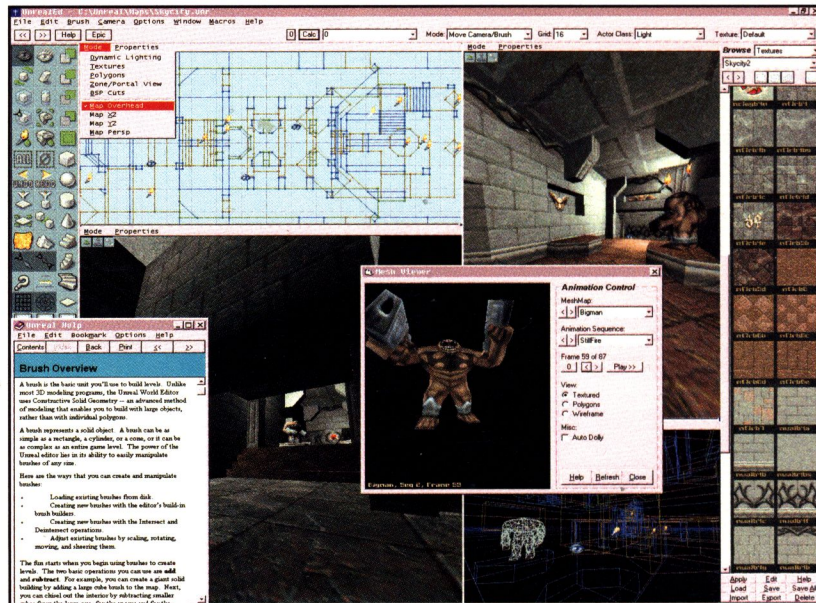
This feature is in, natch, but details are sketchy at present. Epic currently say the number of players in a ‘deathmatch’ will be limited to the bandwidth of the server, but our local beards think that this is unlikely. You should expect at least 16 players, though.



(Above and right) As the name suggests, Level Editor *Unreal* will feature an impressive level editor, which uses a Windows 95 interface and simple icons to make 3D level design nigh on effortless. It will also feature a real-time 3D preview which works alongside the game so you can pop in and out at will to check your levels.

(Right) If that’s the pointy-breasted heroine, aren’t her pointy bits in the wrong place?

(Below) Thunderbirds are go! Oh, sorry, wrong game...



The textures do not pixellate or turn into Hundreds ‘n’ Thousands on close inspection. In fact, they dither and smooth over, creating a very convincing filtered look. Then you realise you’re actually playing under Windows 95 and the engine is using all manner of Direct3D and MMX optimisations to pull off a decent, nay excellent, frame rate. Even in hi-res. And 16-bit colour. Without a 3D accelerator card.

The lighting, too, is extraordinary. Lights can be coloured, single or two-tone, and then made to play across walls and floors in all sorts of cool ways. They flicker like torches, rotate like light-houses, flash on and off, or simulate the undulating motions of bad day-afters or the shimmering of reflected water.

Overall, especially with architectural motifs such as spiral staircases and stained glass windows, everything looks a whole lot smoother and faster and more realistic than *Quake*. The test levels currently in place are designed to show off the various effects. As you watch the churning walls and bizarre shadow effects, you think of *Dark Forces*, of *Quake*, of *Hexen*, and of your last meal. Naturally, the talented boys at Epic are planning to get some *Duke Nukem*-style settings into play:



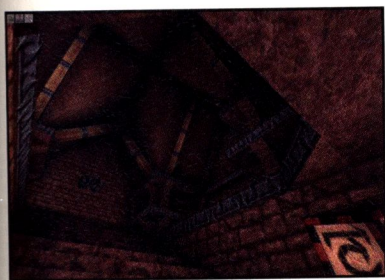
“Yeah, in *Nukem* you had real-life places such as a theatre or space station,” says James. “We’ll be moving to more specific textures to create recognisable areas.” These locales will depict an ancient alien planet where you’re stranded after your prison ship crash lands. You play the sole survivor of the downed vessel, a female prisoner convicted of crimes you didn’t commit, who finds that the peaceful race inhabiting the planet has been overcome by a swarm of “nasty, vicious domineering, and hostile” aliens, who have also crash landed – and they covet the only means of getting off the planet in the centre of a sprawling medieval/sci-fi complex of inter-connecting tunnels, castles and decrepit industrial buildings.

You – our pointy-breasted heroine – have but your agility, combat skills, your sense of direction and a mighty array of big willy-shaped armaments to aid you in your quest to get off this damn rock.





(Left) Oops, here comes the Honey Monster again – don't you wish you'd had three Weetabix for brekkie?



Unreal = BTQSP

The game has been in development for around three years, guided by the pale hands of Jim Sweeney, chairman and head programmer at Epic, who – like his comparative code head John Carmack at id Software – spends all his time, his life even, writing engines ("He doesn't get out much, no..."). In the pre-*Quake* wilderness that was 1994, the original *Unreal* concept was developing within a *Magic Carpet*-style environment, complete with *Terra Nova*-esque mountains and a full bestiary of medieval monsties. Then a few months down the line, the front end had been transformed into a first-person affair, which then underwent a further transmogrification when *Quake* materialised last year.

"Of course, *Quake*'s release had a major effect," says James. "But, frankly, we'd been doing much of the same stuff in *Quake* six months earlier. Only when *Quake* came out, we decided to add features which it lacked, such as dynamic coloured lighting and advanced artificial intelligence."



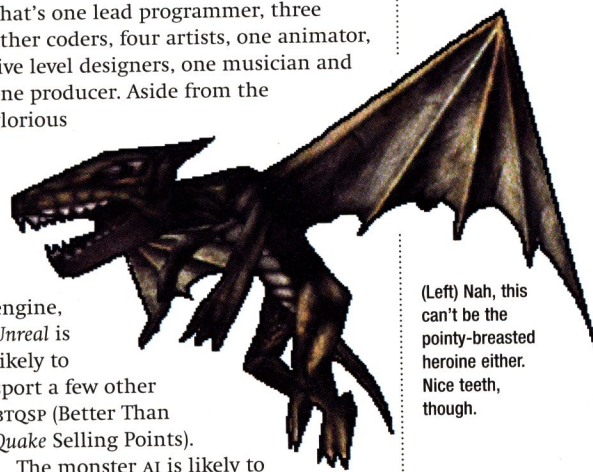
Right now, the whole game is a few months from release, with a team of 16 ferreting away in the background. That's one lead programmer, three other coders, four artists, one animator, five level designers, one musician and one producer. Aside from the glorious

engine, *Unreal* is likely to sport a few other BTQSP (Better Than *Quake* Selling Points).

The monster AI is likely to consist of 15 to 20 adversaries, from gory slug-like things to well-armed ogre-type whatsits. Some will fly but all will have highly advanced artificial intelligence. Steve Polge, who programmed the highly popular, highly deadly *ReaperBots* for the mighty *Quake*, has been hired to do the AI for *Unreal*. Apparently: "We've had to make them far less intelligent. They keep beating our testers."

Level Editor

Unreal will come bundled with an unbelievably impressive Level Editor. It uses the Windows 95 interface and a bunch of simple icons to make 3D level design nigh-on effortless. All the levels



(Left) Nah, this can't be the pointy-breasted heroine either. Nice teeth, though.

(Below) Waitaminnit... perhaps the *Honey Monster* is the pointy-breasted heroine wearing a puffer jacket... Shit, that means she's a two-handbag kinda gal. Unreal...



New!

WEAPONS

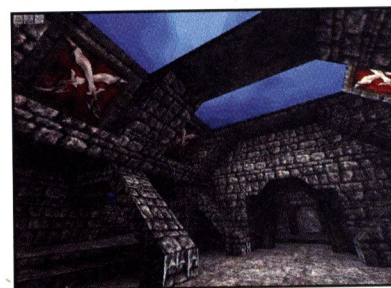
Epic intend to make *Unreal*'s weapons relative to *Quake* as *Duke Nukem*'s were to *Doom*'s, ie better and more imaginative. Some very amusing and destructive pieces of hardware are on the drawing board, which we'll keep secret for now. Apparently they'll all use proper physics to allow ricocheting bullets and all manner of bloodied bouncing body parts. "Yeah, there's going to be loads of gore."

LOCALE

Unreal will have 30 or so 'levels' which will join up seamlessly to build one big area. Basically this means there'll be no next-level transitions. It also means that you'll be able to explore outsidy bits. "Yeah, you'll see structures outside, in the distance, which you can walk up to. Like a castle. You gotta approach it and find your way in." The brushes used in construction will also allow cool effects such as rotating rooms or "entire levels which turn and translate".

are constructed from 'brushes' – solid chunks of matter (walls, floors, stairs etc) and 'pawns' – game objects like monsties and weapons – which can be dragged and dropped within the Editor to make virtually any kind of milieu. It also features a real-time 3D preview and works alongside the game, allowing you to pop in and out to check your 'levs'.

Until *Unreal* is finished, we shall reserve judgement. Next month we'll talk to King Coder Tim Sweeney and will be reporting what one must do to become a King Coder, what one must eat and what one must like. Anon. Z



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REVIEW

ZONE

This month's cover game is the excellent *Ecstatica 2* from Andrew Spencer Studios. Not only does it feature some of the pertest buttocks ever seen in a game (thanks to new and enhanced ellipsoid technology), but it's bigger, better and more violent than the original.



THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM



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80-89 RECOMMENDED

An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something that makes it one of the true greats. Well worth checking out, though.



20 and below PANTS

Absolutely bloody awful. Crap with a capital C. Naff with a capital N. You get the picture.



486 FRIENDLY

The DX2 is still one of the most popular spec machines, but how do you know what games will run on the thing? This icon shows you which games you can still enjoy even if you don't have a ninja Pentium.

Looking back

Tomb Raider

The Christmas break was much needed in more ways than one, but mainly because it gave me the opportunity to catch up on some games that I'd wanted to play but couldn't because of the mad end of year deadlines. *Tomb Raider* was on the top of my list. I'd played it a little bit when I'd visited Core with Charlie last autumn, and again when it came in for review, but hadn't really sat down with it for any length of time. Charlie had confessed to losing frighteningly large chunks of his life playing it, so after getting in from the pub one Saturday night I thought I'd load it up and give it a go.

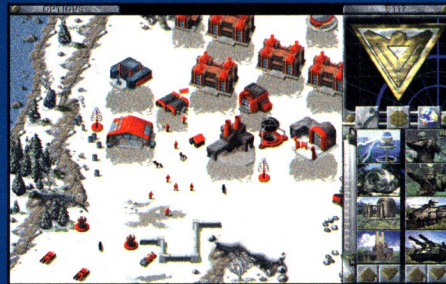


At about 6am I decided to call it a day. I'd been playing it for nearly seven hours and was clearly hooked (as well as in desperate need of some sleep). I thought I'd got quite a way in, but a discussion with Charlie on the phone Monday afternoon (he doesn't often rise before lunch-time) soon put me straight. Apparently, it's bloody huge and I'd only really touched the tip of the iceberg. That was a few weeks ago. I'm still playing it, and although I've progressed a fair way, Charlie gleefully informs me that I'm not even halfway through. It's been a long time since a game has kept me up into the wee hours (although more recently *C&C: Red Alert* has had the same effect on my sleep patterns as *Tomb Raider*). All I can say is, if you haven't bought it, go out and do so. But don't expect your boss to be sympathetic when you tell him your latest bout of serial lateness is down to Lara Croft.

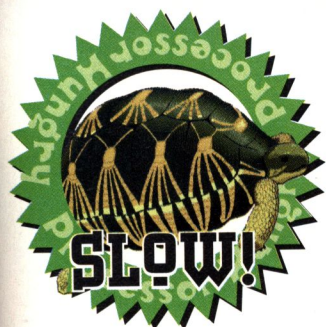
Jeremy Wells
Editor

C&C: Red Alert

Let's get this into perspective: I'm one of the biggest *C&C* fans there ever was. I've completed the original game on both sides, and the *Covert Operations* disk after that, yet I still had doubts

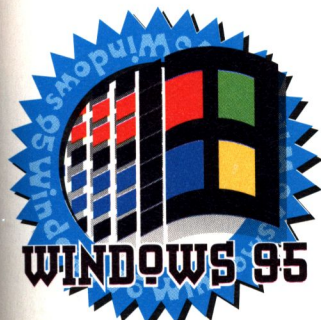


about playing *Red Alert*. How can this be? Well, the AI of the units in the first game could be an absolute pain in the arse, but more to the point, just how much *C&C* can anyone take before they get completely bored with the whole thing? For this reason I waited for the Christmas period before I even took my copy out of its packaging. I'm glad I did. Okay, the units in *Red Alert* are a bit more intelligent (though they still have their problems), but who gives a shit? I'd forgotten how damned addictive this game is. And there are lots of new units to play with too. And hi-res graphics. And new mission types. And tons more stuff to boot. It just goes to show that you can never go wrong with an essentially sound game concept. I know that despite the fact that countless *C&C* clones continue to show up at



PROCESSOR-HUNGRY

Some games run slowly, even on high-spec machines with ninjascope graphics cards. Just run something like *Magic Carpet* in hi-res on virtually any PC and you end up with something running in Jerk-o-vision.



WINDOWS 95

Speaks for itself really – if it's got this icon slapped on it, it's been designed to take advantage of all that Windows 95 offers.

90+	CLASSIC
80-89	RECOMMENDED
70-79	GOOD
50-69	AVERAGE
40-49	BELOW AVERAGE
20-39	POOR
20 and below	PANTS

In perspective

This is designed to be a pure visual guide as to how games of a similar style compare to one another. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the products on a sliding scale.

Game 1

Game 2

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 • Andrew Spencer Studios for their help with the cover images

Special thanks to

Barbs for standing in for Thea while she was off. We couldn't have done it without you.

(Right) It really is a lot less bovver with a hover you know!

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the office every month, *Red Alert* is the game I'll come back to time and time again. It's not just me either. Everyone in the office has got the *Red Alert* bug really bad, and numerous sad conversations about who's got the furthest and what's the best way to complete level X can frequently be heard. I think what we have on our hands here is a very playable, very addictive game indeed. And as any of the reviewers on *PC Zone* will testify, there aren't many of those around anymore.

Chris Anderson
 Deputy Editor

A-10 Cuba

Like Duncan in his review last issue, *A-10 Cuba* re-affirmed my faith in the combat flight sim and proved tons of fun to fart around with in a non-serious manner. The physics model feels good in your hands, there's a superb feeling of weight in the air and destroying a designated target is as satisfying as you would've hoped. Not the biggest flight sim fan, I was surprised how much I enjoyed playing it.

The multi-player scenarios are excellent too, especially the 'space' and 'tower' landscapes, both of which I found to be a most welcome distraction

to the main game, and both of which became popular in the office for a short while.

The game is not without its flaws, though. The targeting system is extremely difficult to get the hang of (to quote our flight sim mad publisher "You have to be a genius to play it") which'll be no fun for beginners, but casual pilots will no doubt disregard this, preferring instead to marvel at the wonderful flight dynamics and gorgeously crisp presentation instead. The manual is also lacking in places, which doesn't help. But having said that, for fun flying *A-10 Cuba* is unbeatable – I await *A-10 Gulf* and *A-10 Attack* with baited breath.

Paul Mallinson
 News Editor



Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunchtime/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...

Tomb Raider

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

Championship Manager 2 (96/97)

A-10 Cuba!

Ecstatica 2



Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

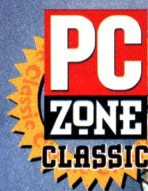
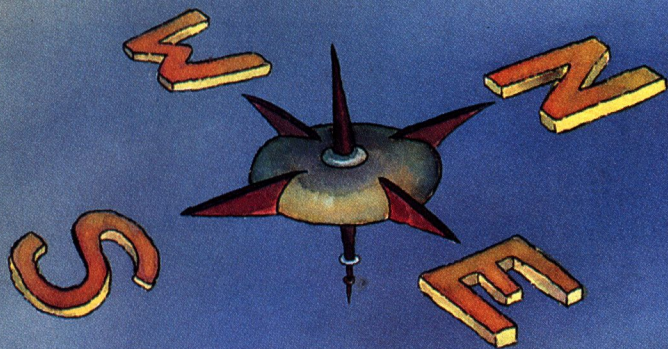
Soultrap

Necrodome

Wizardry Gold

Ashes To Ashes

Daytona USA



Ecstatica II

Charlie Brooker originally wrote an excruciatingly lame intro in which he pretended that he'd misheard us when we asked him to 'review *Ecstatica II*', and was therefore under the impression that we'd urged him instead to 'do some Ecstasy, do'. We took one look at it and broke both his legs with a bloody great shovel. Just part of the new anti-pun regime here at *PC Zone Towers*.

FAIRY TALES. WHAT DO YOU THINK about when someone mentions fairy tales? Chances are, you think about 'soppy' stuff. Happy little elves. Simpering, beautiful princesses. Magic rings and wishing wells. Flowers, forests and the Seven Dwarves. A nonsensical pantomime of Disney-scented cutesiness, designed to placate and pacify pre-school children.

Now that's all well and good... but don't forget about the other side of fairy tales. The mean side. The horrible nightmare side. Ugly sisters. Wicked witches stuffing live children into ovens. Voracious wolves swallowing kindly old ladies whole. Fee, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman...

The fact of the matter is this: while the majority have happy endings, you'd be hard pressed to find a fairy tale

(Right) Guess who won the knob bly knees competition four years running at Butlins?

whose central premise doesn't revolve around an act of spectacular cruelty. Face it. They're vicious. Vicious, cruel and altogether brutal.

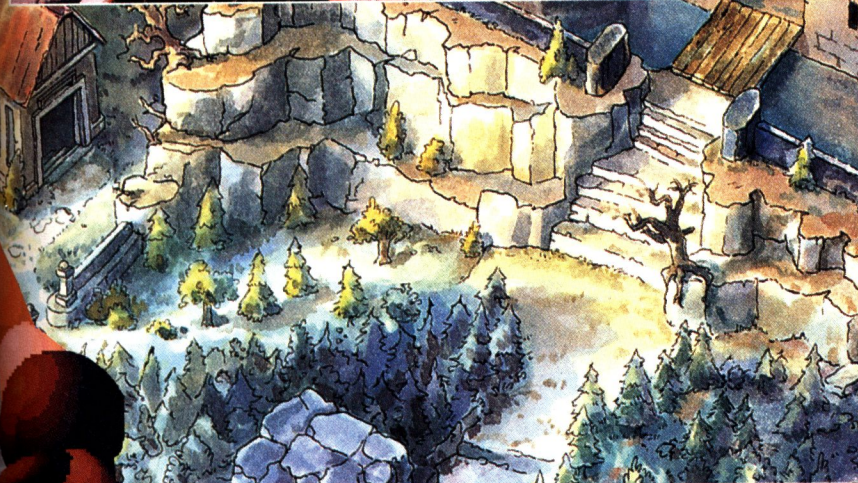
So, then. Welcome to the fairy tale world of *Ecstatica II*.

Once upon a time...

As the game opens, you (a prince) are returning to your beloved kingdom on horseback (helicopters have yet to be invented). Having undergone all manner of peril in the cursed village of Tirich (assuming you played *Ecstatica I*),

(Below) Our hero comes over all politically correct.





you're returning home with a broad smile fixed firmly on your face. Partly because you've survived the aforementioned peril, but mainly because you've got a bride-to-be in tow. That'll put an end to all the idle gossip about your suspected 'preferences'. Not to mention the four-page, photo-packed *News Of The World* exposé of your six-year relationship with a burly, moustachioed dock worker who likes to be manacled, blindfolded and smothered in guacamole.

But back home, something is amiss. And as your horse ambles its way toward the family castle, you can't help noticing a peculiarly dry chill in the air. Your body begins to shudder. Blame, perhaps, the murky clouds which hang overhead. Or the rapidly dwindling daylight. Or maybe the throng of mangled corpses, many impaled hideously upon spikes, which line the route. Something is making you uncomfortable.

And sure enough, just as you're crossing the imperial drawbridge – it happens. Down swoops a demon, plucking your new-found love from



You're bustin' my balls here...

As you can see, the graphics are luvverly. Not to mention unique: *everything* is constructed from ellipsoids, which offer all the speed and solidity of polygons, and none of the ugly angular bits. The rendered backdrops are equally eye-pleasing. Best of all, though, is the animation – it's *fucking fantastic*. Not 'flipping fantastic', 'fucking fantastic', or 'figging fantastic'... it's *fucking fantastic*. Got that?



your arms, whisking her away like some kind of ethereal stagehand. And then a second demon arrives to beat you unconscious. Fade to black.

When you finally manage to come round, humiliatingly shoved in the village stocks, watched over by a pair of homely, violent goblins, try to bear in mind that this is merely the beginning. Things are going to get far, far uglier.

(Top left) *Club Class* has improved a great deal since then.

(Top right) *Ecstatica II* is far more action-orientated than other games of this type. Often it's a case of 'f*** wildly first, ask questions later'.

In order to rescue your bride (and, indeed, your kingdom), you're going to have to conquer the Archmage, the shadowy figure who's behind all this malarkey. And you'll have to uncover and assemble all seven pieces of a mysterious 'Elder Sign' (which looks something like a giant biscuit, but is presumably more expensive and it's close to being cake). And you'll have to



(Above) So, is the female of the species really deadlier than the male? Stay tuned and find out.



(Left) Do you remember that old episode of *Grange Hill* where the school was being swept by a craze for dangerous dares and eventually some kid died because he'd been dared to stand on the top of a high-rise car park and walk along the edge, and he fell off and died? Well, he probably pulled a face like this on the way down.

“fight, think and explore your way through hundreds and thousands of locations as well. So stop sucking your thumb and get on with it.

The way things are

Ecstatica II is superb. Gameplay-wise, there are parallels with *Alone In The Dark* and *Resident Evil* – although it's far larger, nippier and better looking than either of them. It's also considerably more action-packed: once the opening sequence has played out, you won't get a single moment's peace. It's never, ever boring. Aside from all the constant fighting, there's an incredibly complex (and dangerous) series of tasks to work your way through. The playing area is



Give 'em what for

“Sometimes you gotta fight to be a man,” sang Kenny Rogers in the epoch-shattering *Coward Of The County*. Perhaps Kenny had a hand in the production of *Ecstatica II* (although the quality of the soundtrack suggests otherwise), since it contains plenty of opportunities to prove his hypothesis correct. It's fight-a-licious, in other words. A bit like *Streets Of Rage* meets *Sleeping Beauty*. The prince can kick, punch and swing his weapon around like a pro. You can even do roundhouse kicks and forward rolls, should you so choose. And I bet you can't do those in real life without putting your back out.



The Beastie Boys

Ecstatica II plays host to about 50 different flavours of monster, each of whom behaves as if they've just caught you shagging their wife. In an ‘unconventional’ manner. During the wedding ceremony. And they just won't listen to reason. Consequently, there's little point in trying to explain that violence never solves anything, that you have no personal beef with them, that you don't even fancy their wife, etc... no, no, no. Your best bet is to do your best to beat the shit out of them before they do it to you.

The nicest thing about the monstrosities you'll encounter – indeed, the *only* vaguely ‘nice’ thing about them – is that you're constantly surprised by the inventive nature of their ugliness and cartoon-grotesque animation. Unexpectedly running into a new monster elicits a peculiar response, somewhere between ‘abject terror’ and ‘intense curiosity’. Andrew Spencer and the gang have scattered new creatures throughout... which means that even when you're nearing the very end, you're *still* going to be continually surprised by what you see.

immense – I can't think of another game in this genre which comes close in terms of size – or variety. Speaking of variety, since there's plenty of that as you travel from location to location, simply exploring your surroundings is rewarding in itself. It should keep you going for weeks. It's one of those games where there's always something new to discover around the next corner – and by my reckoning it's got over fifteen hundred thousand such corners. We're talking huge.

One of the things that made the original *Ecstatica* such a delight to play was the shocking regularity with which bizarre and unexpected events occurred (my favourite being the table that suddenly sprang to life, raining blows upon the stunned player, yelling abuse in a Northern English accent). *Ecstatica II* also has its fair share of surprises (most of them extremely nasty ones), which I don't really want to give away here. Put it this way: you'll be saying (or thinking) things like “ooh!”, and “what's that?”, and “holy shit!” with startling regularity.

Coming over all ‘Pesci’...

So it's damn good fun – but it *isn't* simple. *Ecstatica II* is not an easy game. It is a bastard. A hard-nosed, brutal, unyielding bastard. If this game were a person, it'd be Joe Pesci in full-on *Goodfellas* psycho-nutter mode, stabbing you in both eyes with a

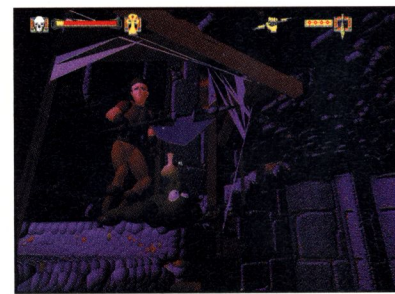
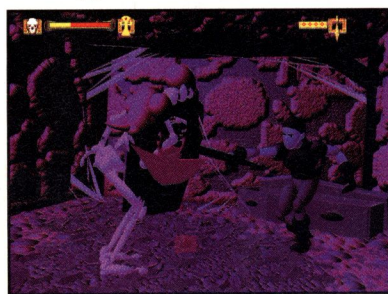
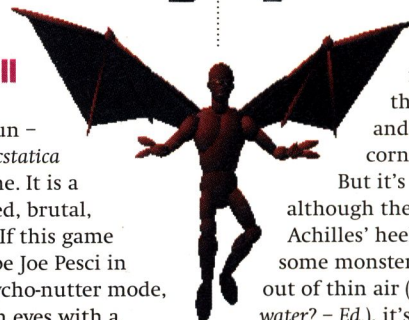
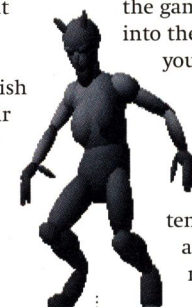
fountain pen and screaming lurid, abusive statements concerning an imaginary liaison between your mother and Captain Clippy-Clops the Donkey.

It's hard. It's tough. It's nails.

One of the criticisms levelled at the original game was that it was too easy to complete: it seems the development team have been careful to ensure that you're not going to get to the end of the sequel without ripping out all your hair (and teeth) with frustration. Indeed, sometimes, the sheer difficulty involved can seem overwhelming. Here's an example. Let's say you've just fallen into the moat that crops up fairly near the start of the game (and I promise you, you'll fall into the moat – at least twice). Once you've come to terms with your new surroundings, and said “ooh, look, I'm swimming” and that sort of thing, you'll be assailed by aquatic nasties (in the form of fish and tentacles). Now, you might not find a fish particularly threatening in real life, but believe you me,

they're a force to be reckoned with in *Ecstatica II*. If there's more than one of them snapping at you, and you're backed into a corner, then it's curtains.

But it's not just the fish – although they were my particular Achilles' heel. Given the way that some monsters literally materialise out of thin air (*Er, shouldn't that be thin water? – Ed.*), it's possible to find



Ring in the new

The differences 'twixt *Ecstatica* numero uno and *Ecstatica* numero two-o are manifold. Here's a handy cut-out 'n' keep guide for you to hold in the palm of your hand and look at with your eyes...

NO MODE-SWITCHING

The original game featured three different 'modes' of travel – sneak, walk and run. A nifty idea, but in practice it turned out to be rather unnecessary, since the player tended to spend approximately 99% of the game running away from that *bastard werewolf*. Consequently, 'sneaking' didn't get much of a look in. Well, that's all been done away with in *Ecstatica II*. It's run, run, run all the way. A little annoying when you're trying to gingerly clamber around the side of a formidably tall tower, but overall, it's an improvement.

GENDER-BENDING IS OUT

Furthermore, the first *Ecstatica* allowed the player to choose the sex of the lead character. It didn't really change anything, since both male and female were equal in terms of strength, speed and buttock pertness – but it was a nice little feature nonetheless. Especially if you've ever fancied yourself as a bit of a 'bird'. Anyway, there isn't any such choice in *Ecstatica II* – it's testosterone time throughout.

'BUT... THERE'S NOTHING THERE!'

A phrase that was uttered so frequently in *Ecstatica I*, it became a mantra. Nobody says it this time around. Strangely, I kind of miss it. In its place is a weird kind of grunting sound – a bit like the sort of noise that really fat people make while asleep, so I'm told.

BEYOND THE GRAVE...

In *Ecstatica* the former, your death would be greeted by one of several animated cut-scenes, in which the ungodly pack of monsters would stand around laughing and beating your lifeless corpse into oblivion, like a class of south London teenagers dealing with an inexperienced supply teacher. There isn't quite so much gratuitous cruelty in *Ecstatica II*. Here, when you die, no one really rubs it in afterwards. They don't have to. Because the manner in which you die is usually bad enough.

MORE MONSTERS...

Yes – loads more monsters and they're easier to kill this time. But here's the important bit: *there's an endless supply of them*. You may have run riot through that particular segment of courtyard a mere five minutes ago, nonchalantly slaughtering everyone in sight, but that's no guarantee of safety. It'll be teeming with nasties again – sooner rather than later.

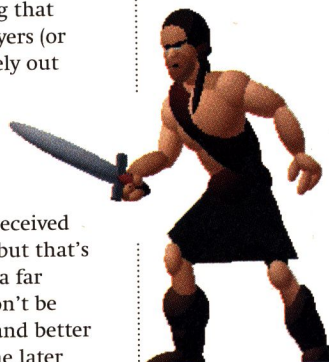
yourself unexpectedly surrounded and outnumbered at more or less any time. Save your position regularly and it's not that much of a problem – but in the heat of the moment, when you've just solved one problem and are running around in the middle of solving another, it's all too easy to forget to make that all-important back-up... which leads to much soul-destroying backtracking. Save, save and save again.

Just as we were going to press, a last-minute phone call from Andrew Spencer Studios (that's Ass for short – now really, I ask you) revealed the team agreed that, yes, perhaps at times it can be a little too ruthless, and to this end they've decided to implement three

different difficulty settings, with the creatures inflicting less damage accordingly. Assuming they're true to their word, this should alleviate the problem somewhat, meaning that slightly more ham-fisted players (or newbies) won't feel completely out of their depth. Ahhhh.

Hey! It's scored less than the first one did...

Ah, yes, it has (the original received 93% back in December '94), but that's simply because the world is a far crueller place these days. Don't be misled. *Ecstatica II* is bigger and better than the original. It beats the later



(Above) Just check out these shots for detail. And the whole thing's bloody huge. You'll be playing it for weeks.

(Below) Blimey! A bloke in a dress! Wonder if it's Jean Paul Gaultier?

In perspective

Ecstatica II rules. It's bigger, better and ballsier than the rest of these games...

Alone In The Dark Trilogy

Time Gate

Bioforge

Ecstatica I

Ecstatica II

Alone In The Dark games hands down.

It's tough, insanely large and has several irritating flaws. But as I said before, it's never, ever boring. It's an immense, sprawling, beautifully animated piece of escapism which will grab you by the throat and attempt to entertain you to death. It may well succeed. **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb RAM (16Mb recommended)

Processor: Pentium

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

Score

91

Bloody wicked. In more ways than one.

Price: £39.99 Release date: March

Publisher: Psygnosis

Tel: 0151 282 3000

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

Grrrr...

It's not all wonderful, you know. *Ecstatica II* also has many really infuriating features. Just thinking about them makes me angry. They don't spoil the game by any means, but they *do* take a little getting used to...

REDUNDANT OBJECTS

When you start the game you'll waste what seems like hours trying to drink from buckets of water, pick up all manner of items, climb up enticing ladders... only to discover that you *can't*. Fair enough, when you're dealing with simple scenery – but *why* did they have

to scatter so many 'dud' (ie un-pick-up-able) objects which look identical to useable ones about the place? I just don't understand...

AWKWARD ANGLES

The constant switching of camera angles enables *Ecstatica II* to maintain a dramatic, cinematic sensibility throughout. Sometimes, however, the transition from scene to scene can be disorientating. Worse still, there are occasions where it's *fatally* disorientating (ie you unwittingly run straight off the side of a tower or into an oncoming beastie).

Phantasmagoria:



It's called *Phantasmagoria*. It comes on five CDs. It came floating into the PC Zone office on a cloud of controversy. **Chris Anderson** has a distinct feeling of déjà vu.

Q KAY, OKAY, YOU'VE GUESSED, IT'S *Phantasmagoria 2*. Except Sierra don't put numbers on their game titles anymore. Hence *Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within*, *Leisure Suit Larry: Love For Sail*, etc... and now, *A Puzzle Of flesh*. This new system has presumably been devised to hide the fact that the *Larry* and *King's Quest* series are now in their sixth, seventh and eighth incarnations. *Phantasmagoria* is a relative newcomer to the Sierra money-spinning adventure stable, so you may well think there's plenty of life in it yet. Sadly, this sequel has a heavy weight on its shoulders, due to the fact that the original game was, erm, a bit crap.

Been there, seen it, done it

I was in two minds whether to take this review on or not. I hated the first game with its crappy puzzles, unforgivably dire acting and CD access times from hell. Yet, strangely, I could see myself liking it under different circumstances. For example, if it had taxing puzzles to match its lavish production values, I could have warmed to it considerably.

(Above) I HATE strawberry wine gums.

(Above right) This is Terese. She's a bit of a tart, this one.

(Right) It's an alien. On a string. It is (*Shut up - Ed.*).

(Right) I've got a great big axe and you haven't. Fancy a fight?



You can see, then, what my hopes were for the sequel: more complex puzzles, a more convincing performance from the 'cast' and, hey ho, you've got yourself an entertaining and scary adventure game with the sort of gripping plot that Sierra have become famous for. Which is why I decided to give the game a second chance and plunge into the sequel with hopes raised high, lights turned low and stereo at full blast.

Unfortunately, *Puzzle Of Flesh* didn't exactly get off to a flying start. After about four hours of gameplay I was halfway through CD three (there are only five in total) so I thought I'd finish the thing on my first day of play. This is exactly what happened when I played the first *Phantasmagoria*. Except this time I got stuck. Badly stuck. Stuck to the point of being an incredibly stuck thing in a big pot of glue. But hold your horses, I'm not saying that I got stuck because the game is so challenging and taxing that no matter how much I racked my brains and pulled my hair I couldn't work out what to do - it was purely because the answer was so simple that I just couldn't believe it could in any way, shape or form be construed as a 'puzzle'. Let me explain.



Sex, gore and more sex

Actually, that's not entirely true. There's only one sex scene that could be considered to be in any way explicit, and even that's nothing you wouldn't see on TV after 8pm. The gore content, while plentiful, is not as shocking as it was in the original game either. That's not to say that there isn't lots of blood in it (it spurts out all over the shop every five minutes), there just isn't anything to compare with the scene in the first game in which some poor woman got it in the face with a garden shovel. Have Sierra lost their bottle and given in to the censorship bloodhounds? On this evidence, it would seem they have.

A Puzzle of Flesh



Do what?

You play the role of Curtis Craig, a very mixed-up individual who has lots of hang-ups due to being mistreated as a child. You experience disturbing flashbacks (these make up the bulk of the horror scenes). You work for Wyntech, a company that concocts all sorts of miracle cures for difficult health problems. You spend a lot of time on your computer. You get bored shitless with spending time on your

(Above) Er, so what shall we talk about next, guys?

(Above right) Did you kill my bruvver?



computer. You get hopelessly bloody stuck in the game because you forgot to send a ferking e-mail off to some twat who has nothing to do with the plot whatsoever. This is how I got 'stuck'. I forgot to carry out the most mundane of tasks and so the game decided to punish me by pretending that the various anagrams and puzzles on my computer were the real reason I couldn't progress any further. Would I say that this was the most fundamental of flaws in the game's design? Would I say that this was, in fact, unforgivable? Indeed I would say both of these things and a lot more besides, many of which would be too colourful to print on the pages of this magazine.

To make things even worse, I was unfortunate enough to encounter this particular problem not just once in the game, but *twice*. Luckily, the second time around I was a little bit wiser to the game's playful frustration tactics and simply went round just 'doing' things until something happened. Despite these problems, I persevered with it anyway and completed it without any further hiccups.

Did I enjoy it? Well, to be honest, it's not too bad. It's definitely an improvement on the first *Phantasmagoria*, but as Jeremy correctly points out, that's not actually saying a hell of a lot. Still, the acting is better this time round and the plot's marginally more interesting (all Curtis' colleagues get murdered one by one and you have to find out who's doing it), but some of the problems that plagued the original are still there. You still feel as though you're being led through the game without having to do a lot to make things happen. This

is the biggest problem I had with the first game, and the sequel doesn't do a lot to put things right. However, if you liked the first game (and judging by how it sold in the UK, there's a lot of you who did) you can rest easy in the knowledge that you'll like the sequel just as much. Personally, I'm going to stick with *The Pandora Directive* and *The Dig* (adventure games *pour hommes*, don't you know). **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 12Mb (16Mb recommended)

Processor: DX4 (Pentium recommended)

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles

Controls: Mouse **Note:** Windows 95/DOS

Score

65

Better than the first one. Just.

Price: £49.99 **Release date:** TBC

Publisher: Sierra

Tel: 0118 920 9100

dan *The People's Choice*
Personal Computers

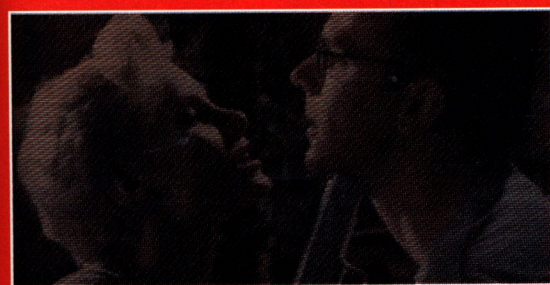


The path of love...

...never runs smooth. Curtis (that's you) and his girlfriend, Jocelyn, have something of a love-hate relationship, as you can see from the pictures below. Women, eh? Can't live with them, can't live without them.



How did they get from this state of affairs...



...to this one? Buy the game and find out. Nahhhh.

Diablo



Seeing as this RPG covers pretty common and traditional ground you'd expect the common and traditional opening paragraph to contain an abundance of 'thy', 'thee', 'sire' and words ending in -eth. **John Davison** has ceased to find this kind of thing amusing... Partly because he's run out of ideas.

OKAY, OKAY. NOT BEING ONE TO break with tradition, I'll switch into RPG mode... "And, lo, it didst come to pass that the mighty Grunthos the Flatulent (erstwhile poet, now warrior prince of the land of Bazzzxon'khaaz) didst stareth into the lair of the demon and didst strike his sword through the beast cleaving its mighty arse in twain." See what I mean? Bollocks, isn't it? RPGs have been responsible for inspiring some of the most embarrassing lines of prose ever to grace... well, pretty much anything really. So there you go - I'm not going to do it. *Diablo* is a true '90s' RPG, so this a '90s' review.

Produced by the same developers who knocked out *WarCraft II*, it's pretty safe to say that the development of *Diablo*

(Above right) One of the early quests has you taking on the undead form of King Leoric (the Black King). He's one of the first 'big' bad guys that you come across.

(Below) The game is built up as a series of catacombs that are randomly generated one above the other. As you finish exploring each level you simply travel to the next by walking down the stairs.



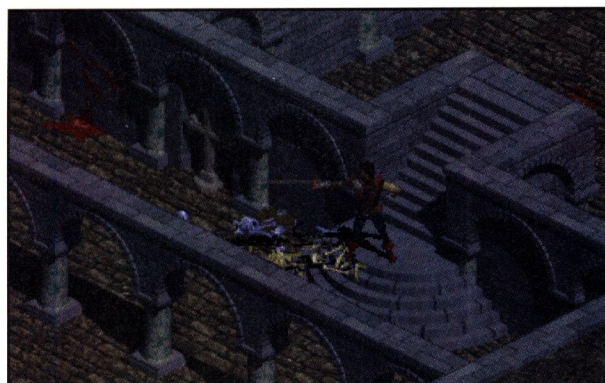
has been accompanied by a certain amount of excitement. There hasn't really been a 'proper' RPG that deals with 'true' RPG issues (demons, monsties, blokes with swords, magic etc, etc) for a while now, so if nothing else *Diablo* serves as a good example of what can be done now that we're in the age of the Pentium. I don't know about you, but I can't really think of a decent game of this type since Origin's *Ultima VIII: Pagan* about three years ago. And that, let's face it, was a little bit of a disappointment compared to the previous *Ultima* titles... so much so that we only gave it 78 per cent.

Hack 'n' slack

At the heart of it all *Diablo* is fairly simple to describe as it's an svga, isometric, scrolling, combat-based, quest-driven, real-time, role-playing

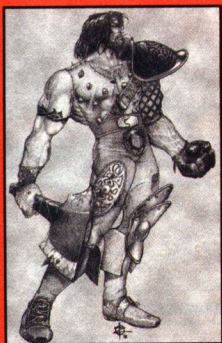
game. You play one of three character styles (outlined elsewhere) and begin the game dumped in the centre of town without any idea of what it is you have to do. After a bit of exploring you meet the townsfolk - a blacksmith, innkeeper, healer, all of the usual stuff - and before you know it you're faced with your first quest. A terrible demon called the Butcher lives in the catacombs underneath the nearby monastery and the townsfolk would be terribly grateful if you wouldn't mind bugging off and killing him, thank you very much. After equipping yourself with rudimentary weapons and revitalising potions from the appropriate establishments you venture cautiously underground.

It's at this point that one of the major features of *Diablo* makes itself glaringly apparent. The 'business' bit takes place



Take your pick

As you'd expect, this being a traditional RPG, *Diablo* gives you a choice of three different character styles with which to embark on your quest.



WARRIOR

Big, muscled, hairy, undoubtedly smelly bloke who's a bit handy with swords, clubs and pretty much anything with spikes through it... but who's a bit limited when it comes to the intricacies of magic. Despite being a bit light on the old grey matter, which means he can't use spells, the warrior is a good character to have your first go with, though, as he's the hardest and therefore most resilient character.



ROGUE

The Sisters of the Sightless Eye are a loosely organised guild of athletic chicks with plunging cleavages and thigh-length boots – a sort of fantasy Spice Girls, but with less attitude. Although not as hard as the warriors, these girls are a bit handy with a bow and arrow and, like most women, pretty good at throwing things when involved in a bit of a scrap. As a result they're pretty good at avoiding close-up scraps.



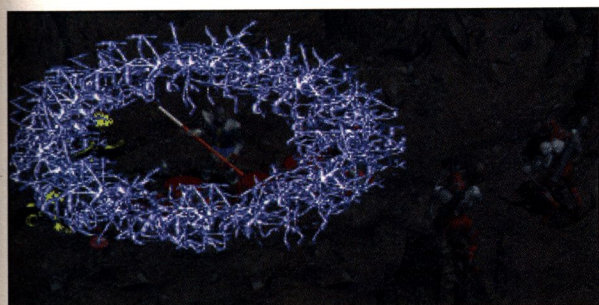
SORCERER

Big blokes in dresses... and if this picture is anything to go by, they seem to have a penchant for piercing their feet. Eugh. Anyway, these guys are pretty shit-hot in the magic department of course, but completely and utterly arse when it comes to getting in a fight. What they really need is a kind of Debbie McGee side-kick who's into kick-boxing and DIY pyrotechnics. Maybe they'll put this in the sequel.

in the layers upon layers of catacombs that lie underground, all of which are generated randomly by the game engine. Once you've begun your adventure they remain the same – but if you go back to the beginning and use another character you'll find that everything's different.

Once you descend to the first layer of the labyrinth you're immediately thrust into the gameplay proper: you wander around opening up rooms by simply

(Right) As you gain experience and become more powerful, the effects you can produce with your spells become pretty spectacular.



It wouldn't be the same without an over-the-top story

As with all games of this type, the background storyline is suitably OTT, and as a special treat for the yellow fingernail brigade it's presented in the manual in truly pompous style.

Basically, the whole thing revolves around a big inter-dimensional punch-up called 'The Great Conflict' which is pretty much your typical scrap between the forces of good and evil. On one side you have the 'angels' who have names like Arch-Angel Tyrael and Izual Bearer of the Angelic Runeblade Azurewrath, whereas on the other you have a group of seven demons ranked in order of nastiness with Duriel Lord of Pain at the bottom and Diablo Lord of Terror at the top.

Apparently, history tells of how the battle raged until eventually the good guys, assisted by a bunch of warrior-monk types from the order of Horadrim (pledged to the forces of light) managed to imprison Diablo (and his brothers) in mystical soulstones before burying them deep within the Earth. Apparently, before the historic punch-up, the denizens of hell had fallen out and the lower-ranking four demons had rebelled against the three top dogs and done much of the good guys' work for them.

In order to protect the world and to ensure against soulstones falling into the

wrong hands, the Horadrim built a monastery above the site, under which they constructed level upon level of catacombs into which they could bury the honoured dead (who would in turn protect the world – somehow. Not quite sure how, seeing as they're dead but they do).

Unfortunately though, after many years, the order of the Horadrim died off and left the monastery completely empty. By now no one was watching over the evil beneath the Earth and, to cut a long story short, some weird stuff started happening.

Numerous villages were built around the monastery, and as time passed the spirit of Diablo managed to sneak out and start wreaking havoc. The peak of his achievements was to lure King Leoric into the darkness and influence him to break open the soulstone, thus setting him free. After this the King gradually decayed from your typical righteous, just and generally fab guy into a monarch soon to be dubbed the 'Black King'.

The ensuing mayhem caused many to die and before anyone knew what was going on Diablo's reign of terror gradually crept back onto Earth. Your job – as you'd expect – is to go in and eventually try to sort out the big bad guy. Surprise surprise. But you know it makes sense. Sort of.

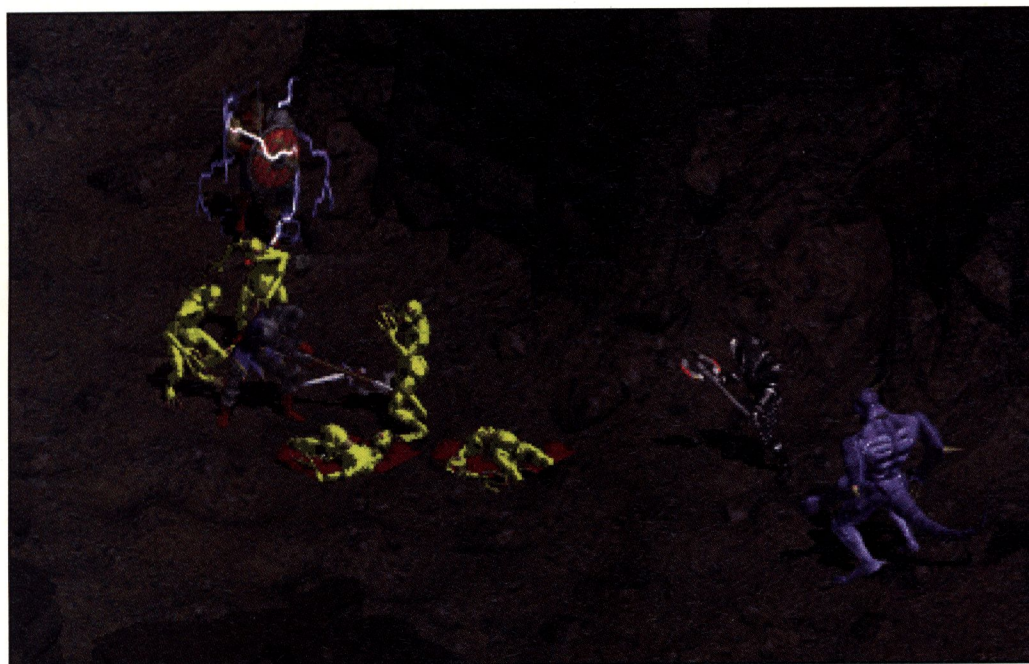
pointing and clicking and then fighting with the seemingly endless hordes by highlighting them with your mouse pointer and left-clicking in order to use whatever weapon you happen to be holding. As you progress you'll find magical items, spells, weapons and armour, and as your level of experience increases your character will become gradually more and more powerful. As you grow you take on more and more difficult quests (which are nearly all based on either finding a specific object or killing a certain character) as well as increasingly nasty bad guys. Once you have worked your way through the catacombs and the caverns beneath you eventually have to face Diablo himself.

Sound familiar?

To be honest, it has to be said that there's nothing in *Diablo* that we haven't seen before. There are virtually no new ideas here at all; I played the thing solidly for days and at no point did it really throw up any great surprises. What it does do though – and what makes it so damn good – is nick all the best bits from everyone else's games and then refine them to the point of near perfection.

For a start, the player interface is so simple it's a dream to use. Things can be moved around your inventory, spells can be set up and weapons changed with the greatest of ease, and despite the fact that this is a real-time RPG





In perspective

The RPG is nowhere near as abundant as it used to be, and as a result the style has changed a bit over the past few years. *Diablo* probably has as much in common with something like *Crusader* as it does with *Ultima VIII: Pagan*.

Crusader: No Remorse

Ultima VIII

Diablo

« you'll find that the interface is so straightforward you won't even have any trouble doing things in the heat of battle.

On top of this, the presentation of the game is absolutely gorgeous – the SVGA visuals are crisp and well drawn and everything is light-sourced in real-time to give the catacombs a menacing and foreboding feel. Along with this the gameplay is accompanied by some truly fantastic context-sensitive music. As you wander the towns you're treated to some beautifully simple classical guitar, while underground there are dramatic orchestral washes

(Above) Er... guys, er... help. Grunthos accidentally electrocutes himself.

(Above right) The 'lighting your farts' gag makes a welcome comeback into the world of RPGs.

(Below) As you descend further you leave the man-made catacombs and enter the realms of hell where you are attacked by demons and lava monsters.



accompanied by thumping and oppressive rhythms.

My only complaint has to be that as Blizzard have attempted to provide us with the perfect blend of everyone's favourite RPGs, the end result is a bit watered down. After working your way through the first five or six quests it soon becomes apparent that all the gameplay involves is exploring and twatting things. If you're a warrior you twat them with something sharp and heavy, if you're a rogue you shoot things at them, and if you're a sorcerer you zap them with magic. There are loads and loads of different monsties for you to kill and they all look really ace – but nothing and no-one you come across really exudes any kind of 'character'. If anything, you could say that *Diablo* has as much in common with something like Origin's *Crusader: No Remorse* as it does with any RPG you'd care to mention.

The people in the village are fairly boring stereotypes who speak with either a Scottish or Welsh accent (the village elder does an appalling Sean Connery impression), and when you reach the catacombs there are no characters to speak of whatsoever – apart from the baddies. Part of the



Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb for multi-player)

Processor: P60

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse

Note: Windows 95 required

beauty of the *Ultima* games was that there were other 'people' knocking around who had a bit of personality about them. Not so here: everyone just stands around. They have plenty to say, but never seem to 'do' anything. This aside, though, it has to be said that *Diablo* is a very high quality game. I'm in two minds as to whether or not it should be a Classic, but it has to be said that it's an enjoyable hack 'n' slash game that's brilliantly put together. **Z**

Score

88

A beautiful example of a genre taken to the limit.

Price: £44.99 **Release date:** Out now

Publisher: Zblac/Blizzard

Tel: 01626 332233

dan *The People's Choice*
Personal Computers



Multi-player monstie mangling

As is the norm these days, *Diablo* makes a pretty big deal about its multi-player support... and what a potentially groovy thing it is too. Featuring every method of linking you can think of (IPX networking, direct connection via null modem cables, modem connection or Internet play via Blizzard's Battle.net service), *Diablo* allows up to four players to either fight a quest as a team, or battle it out all alone... there's even a facility built in to switch between friendly and aggressive interaction between the different players. Although not everyone will be able to take advantage of this, it's worth noting that a shareware version of the game called 'Spawn' is included on the CD, so that your mates can install multi-player only versions of the game on their machines in order to allow you to play. It's also worth noting that all network (that's IPX and Battle.net) games are dynamic, which means that unlike a game such as *Red Alert*, you can join or leave a game at any time *Quake*-style.

This month's keyboard overlay is for Rowan Software's exquisitely detailed *Flying Corps*. As always, we suggest you play this sim with a joystick (and a highly-polished leathery helmet). Not all of the keyboard commands are covered here, so please refer to the manual for a full list.

LEFT CURSOR	BANK TO THE LEFT	ENTER (NUMERIC PAD)	DROP BOMBS
RIGHT CURSOR	BANK TO THE RIGHT	TAB	ACCELERATED TIME
UP CURSOR	TO PUSH NOSE DOWN	PRINT SCREEN	SCREENSHOT
DOWN CURSOR	TO PULL NOSE UP	ALT + F6	REVERSE ANGLE PADLOCK

PADLOCK NEXT NEAREST ENEMY	PADLOCK NEXT NEAREST FRIENDLY	PADLOCK NEXT NEAREST GRD TARGET	PADLOCK NEXT WAYPOINT
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PADLOCK SUBJECT OF MESSAGE	OUTSIDE VIEW	INSIDE VIEW	INVISIBLE COCKPIT
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FLY BY/CHASE TOGGLE	SATELLITE VIEW TOGGLE	IMPACT TOGGLE	CONFIGURE MENU
---------------------	-----------------------	---------------	----------------



TURN OFF PADLOCK







1 RPM 10%	2 RPM 20%	3 RPM 30%	4 RPM 40%	5 RPM 50%	6 RPM 60%	7 RPM 70%	8 RPM 80%	9 RPM 90%	0 RPM 100%	- RPM SMALL STEP DOWN	= RPM BIG STEP UP	DEL INSIDE/OUTSIDE VIEW
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FLYING CORPS

This keyboard template has been created by PC Zone for purchasers of the game *Flying Corps*, published by Empire Interactive. It is not approved or endorsed in any way by Empire Interactive. All rights recognised.



	CTRL + D DETAIL LVL CHANGE	R REFORM SQUADRON	H SQUADRON GO HOME			ALT + J JOYSTICK CONFIGURE	I INFOPANEL TOGGLE	K CONTROL SENSITIVITY						P PAUSE	ENTER PADLOCK ON/OFF
ALT + X EXIT							SPACEBAR FIRE GUNS			1 RPM MINIMUM	2 RPM 100%				

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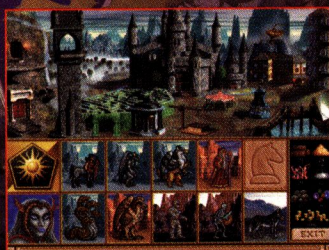
Will you back the villainous usurper and lead his evil hordes, or be loyal to the righteous prince and lead the armies of light?

The choice is yours, the challenge is immense, and the consequence of failure is death.

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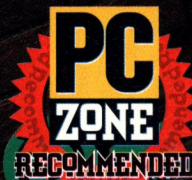
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The City of Lost Children



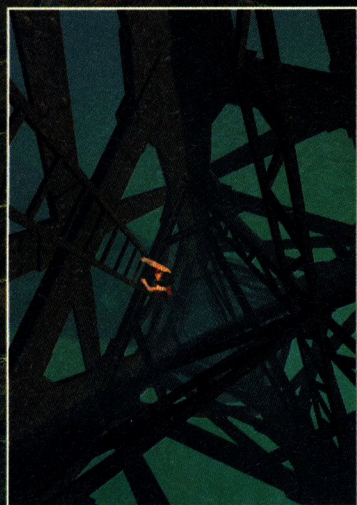
Patrick McCarthy thinks that a city for lost children is a good idea. Especially if you could make deposits.

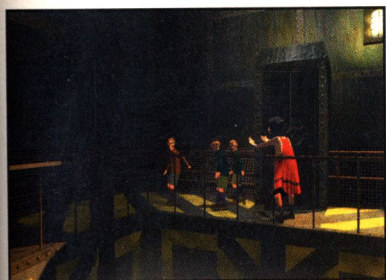
I DON'T LIKE CHILDREN. THEY'RE NASTY, sneaky little gits who, in the non-interventionist company of their bovine parents, think they have some kind of special dispensation to be complete arseholes wherever they happen to be – and get away with it. Well, not when I'm around they don't. I subscribe firmly to the *Beano* School of Child Discipline. If they come into my home with their dullard parents

(Main picture) See? It's not just men who pee down alleyways...

and give me any lip they get a whack across the shins with a cricket bat; if they rampage about unchecked and break my possessions, I belabour the back of their heads with a slipper made of corrugated iron until their faces go purple and they give rise to shouts of "Ooyah," then I kick them out of the house with my big boot that leaves large throbbing marks on their posterior.

On the other hand, if they utilise some special gift to help me out – like using their exceptionally stretchy arms to save my hamster, stranded aboard a toy yacht in a perilous situation in the middle of the park pond – then traditional rewards will be theirs: large plates of sausage and mash, piled yards high with the sausages sticking out at funny angles, topped with three dozen fried eggs and a huge bucket of chips, for example. But since they almost never do anything like that, I spend most of my time beating them. It's much more fun anyway.





The kids are alright

If you saw *The City of Lost Children* at the cinema you'll know already that it was an atmospheric film from the people who made *Delicatessen*. You'll also know that it's... well, odd: a dark, strange tale of a 'family' of clones kidnapping kids in order to steal their dreams. The city itself is almost entirely free of children (so it's probably quite a nice place to live) because so many have been stolen and taken out to the oil rig where the clones hang out. The film deals with the attempts by Miette, a girl thief, and One, an educationally subnormal circus strongman, to save One's little brother from the unpleasant clutches of the dream-stealing clones and other scientific experiments gone wrong. They're led by Krank, a clone who can't dream and who's ageing faster than a Hale and Pace sketch. And even though it has children in it, it's still alright – if only because the children aren't Disney-fied.

It might help if you've seen the film, because you'll at least be familiar with all the characters, but if you haven't, it doesn't really matter. The game uses many of the film's elements and more or less works around the plot. But despite the fact that Marc Caro, the film's artistic director, had a lot of influence during the making of the game, knowing what happens in the film won't help you solve any of the puzzles.

Oh, what an atmosphere...

Like the film, the game looks very good indeed. The background artwork is outstanding, and captures the feel of the film very well. The attention to detail in the animation of the polygon-



based figures is also excellent – it's the only game of its type that I can remember in which figures walking up or down stairs actually fit their feet to the steps – and key points in the game are punctuated by frequent pre-rendered cut-scenes.

As soon as you play it you'll think four words: 'Alone', 'In', 'The' and 'Dark'. Make that seven words, and add 'Only', 'Better' and 'Looking'. Like *AITD* and its successors, it's a third-person viewed adventure, with frequent camera angle changes to frame the action. Unlike any of the *AITD* series, you can also change the camera angles yourself at times, by pressing the spacebar when the camera icon flashes at the top right of the screen. And also unlike *AITD*, it's more lush than a room full of alcoholics.

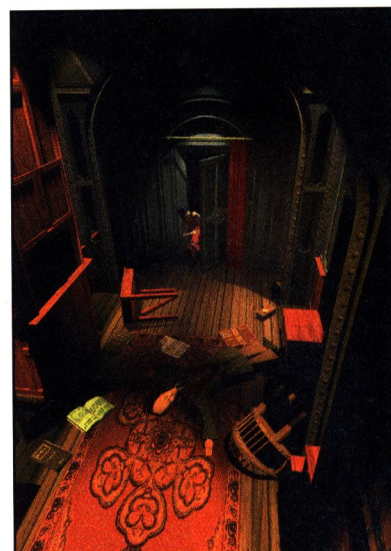
As you'd expect, the *AITD* approach means that gameplay consists largely of exploring areas, talking to other characters and trying to find objects to pick up to use somewhere else later on. In other words, there's a lot of hard thinking involved. There's still the usual problem of games of this sort: trying to do something, knowing it can be done, but not being in exactly the right place on screen for it to work. You'll tire of hearing Miette say "I don't think I can manage it" and "I can't do anything".

On the other hand, without the combat and sudden unexpected deaths associated with the aforementioned games, it's more forgiving, and a lot less

(Above) The prototype 2CV racing car was almost finished.

(Above left) Diana Ross and the Supremes: The Early Years.

(Above right) "And don't come out until you've tidied up in there, young lady," said Mater.



frustrating. About the only enforced game-loading that occurs is if you get chucked into the cellar as punishment more than three times, because the game then ends. But since this only happens if you hang about in the orphanage schoolroom too long, it's not worth worrying about. The other element that adds to the game's charm is that there often seem to be alternative solutions to the problems that face you. So if you're patient and like exploration and object collection, and if you've always liked *Alone In The Dark*-type games, but been put off by the irksome combat and constant dying, this could be the ideal game for you. **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb recommended)

Processor: 486DX2/66 (Pentium recommended)

Graphics: 8Mb

Sound: All major sound cards

Graphics: VGA

Controls: Keyboard

Score

84

Atmospheric evocation of the film, with puzzles thrown in.

Price: £34.99 **Release date:** Out now

Publisher: Psygnosis

Tel: 0151 282 3000

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers



Our heroes

MIETTE

You control Miette, the 12 year old orphan. In the film there are disturbing, not to say suggestive, undertones to her interest in, and relationship with, the strongman One. If you've only seen it in the (inexplicably) dubbed English version which

came out on video, you won't know this, as her voice seemed to be performed by a reject from the Children's Film Foundation, and had all the inflexion of Stephen Hawking's voice synthesiser with 'Kiddiwink Mode' switched to the max.



ONE

The circus strongman with the heart of gold and the intellect of algae, One is played in the film by Ron Perlman, a very unusual looking man indeed. To say that his face is craggy is a bit like saying that the Himalayas are slightly slopy. Without wishing to

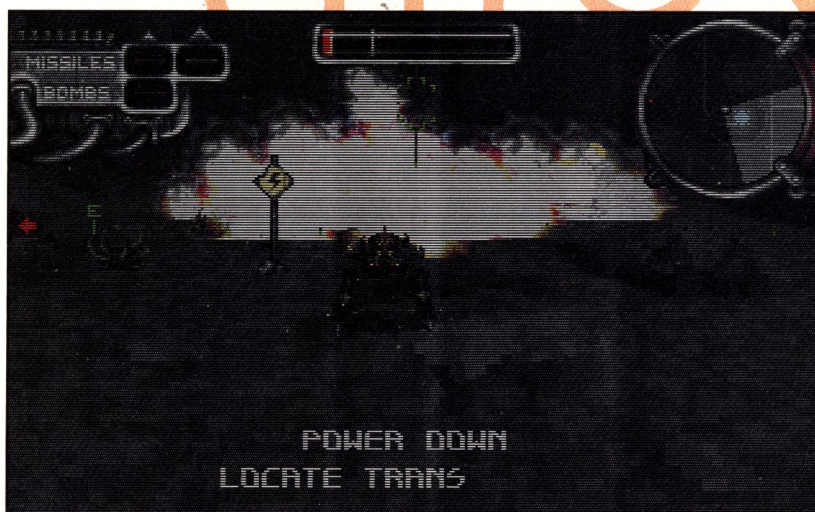
be too unkind, it looks like the bones of his face are on the outside. He makes Tom Waites look like Keanu Reeves. Anyway, it's his little brother, Denrée, who you'll be trying to save from the clutches of the evil Krank and his family. And before you ask, it's got nothing to do with *Crackerjack*.



Amok

PC Zone: "Here's a game to review." **Duncan MacDonald:** "It hasn't got a herc in it, has it? I hate hercs. All games have hercs in them these days." **Zone:** "Don't worry, there aren't any hercs." **Dunc:** "Phew." **Zone:** (Quietly) "Ho, ho, ho!"

(Right) Is this a herc I see before me? Or an extraterrestrial Pan's Person?



Their plan was to make the two corporations equal opponents again.

"To make this happen the Bureau has hired just the right man, Gert Staun, who has made a living as a mercenary from the beginning of the war. Staun pilots a highly modified battle walker named the Slambird, which is equipped with a range of missiles, bombs, mini guns and many other types of military devices."

What the hell did that mean?

Yeah, a load of shite, wasn't it? You're lucky, though – you only had to read it: I actually had to copy it out. Oh, well. Anyway, what that little lot does mean, at the end of the day, is as follows... you control a robot/herc doofer and you have to shoot just about everything that moves, and collect power-ups. And that's about it, really.

You see *Amok* is yet another 3D shoot 'em up, and we've all seen a squillion of them, haven't we, chums? Nevertheless, I've still got another page to fill, so I can't stop yet. Let's move in for a closer look, shall we?

CAN I JUST START BY SAYING 'A miracle has just happened'? It really has. Here's what occurred.

1. I took the *Amok* CD from the packaging and stuck it in the PC drawer.
2. I closed the drawer.
3. Up popped what I took to be the install box, on the monitor.
4. I chose the Windows 95 rather than the DOS option.
5. The game started.
6. Blimey!

It hadn't installed a single file. It was running straight from the disc, like a PlayStation title. Lordy!

End of miracle, onto game...

Hmmm. Okay then. I'll start by boring you senseless, meaning prepare yourself for some of the story blurb from the manual... "The great war lasted for nearly 47 years, but now the two largest corporations have finally ceased fire and the planet Amok is peaceful

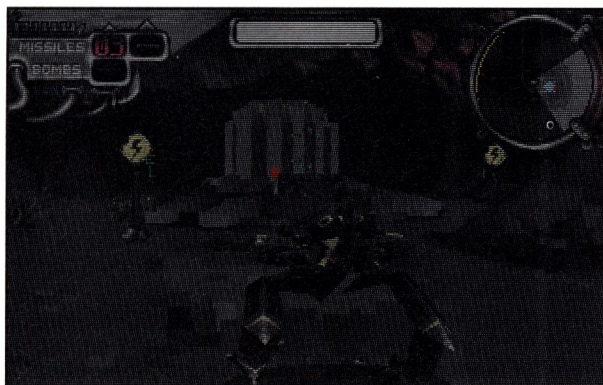
again. The Nonlun Corporation was unwillingly forced into the negotiations of a peace contract. They had suffered a series of serious defeats on the battlefield, and their only choices were large-scale nuclear war or a peace treaty.

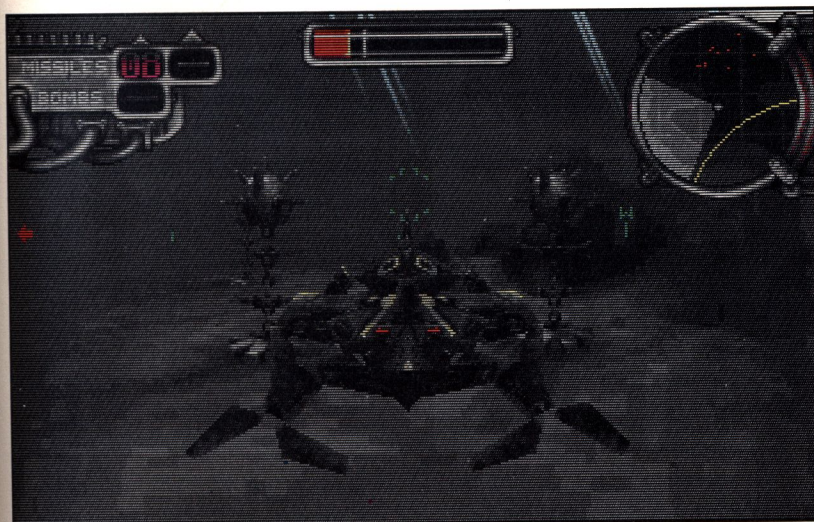
"People celebrated the peace, but beneath the surface the suspicion and anger still lurked, like a fire smothered by a blanket, balancing between total extinction and that smouldering ember that could ignite it again. (Who writes this stuff? – A reader.)

"The bureau was one of the many small outfits that profited heavily during the war, recruiting mercenaries and bounty hunters for special assignments ranging from simple bombings to complex assassinations.

(Below left) Your first task, should you decide to accept this mission, is to kill the rampant blanchmange in the distance...

(Below right) Should you *not* accept this mission, however, the blanchmange will splatter you instead. Another sticky moment, Julian?





Slick and crisp...

You know I said *Amok* plays straight from the disc like a PlayStation game? Well, it also looks and feels like a PlayStation game. In fact, there's every possibility it is a PlayStation game, but if this is the case it's one I've not come across myself.

The action starts with your herc/mercenary chap underwater: he's got little propellers at this stage of the game. Using basic *Doom*-style control, you have to follow the little waypoint arrow on your HUD and locate the level's exit point. While doing this you also have to keep an eye on the inset radar, just in case there are any red 'dots'. Spot a red dot and you've spotted an enemy (in level one these are sharks and exploding puffer fish). What next? Er, need you ask? You turn towards the target and fire, obviously. Or you can run away. (Running away is an option in *Amok* by the way. You can complete a level without clearing it, but you do have to meet the mission objectives, such as blowing something up, or collecting another thing, and on and on.)

Anyway...

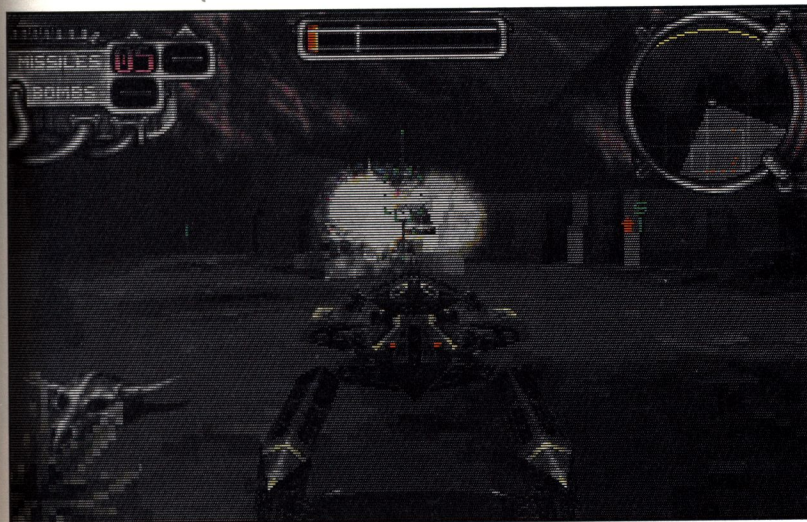
Anyway. So you've killed some sharks. And you've killed some exploding puffer

fish. And you've avoided some floating mines. And you've collected a power-up which increases your fire rate. And you've blown up a wall, behind which was a secret area containing a bonus health icon and another power-up. And then you get to the exit point. Blam. You're given a percentage count of baddies destroyed and 'secrets' found, and then it's off to level two.

Now you're on land, and your mercenary/herc stomps about in true *Star Wars* walker style. Regarding the gameplay, though, it's the same gig, only this time the play area is bigger, and mazier, and more dangerous, etc.

Cynical bastard...

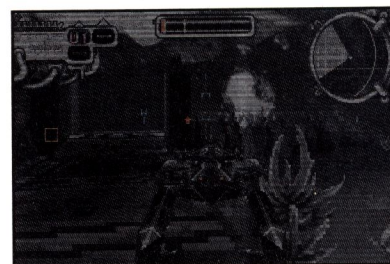
Do I sound cynical? I don't mean to, as it happens, it's just that the feeling of *déjà vu* is so heavy it's like having five anvils sellotaped to my brain. However, apart from the unbelievably hackneyed plot and gamestyle drudge, *Amok* is really quite jolly. The graphics are nice, the sound is nice, and in a 'leave your brain at home' shoot 'em up surely this is all that matters? Maybe so, maybe so. But I'll also add that *Amok* is bloody, sodding difficult and that passwords are handed out at such a stingy rate you'll find yourself repeating levels you've already done time and time



(Left) Those spiky things are mines, right? And that crab-like thingy is yours, OK? (Bloody telegraphed that one, didn't ya? - Ed.)

again just to get back to the level you keep getting killed on. You know? And the layouts of the later, larger levels become so confusing - what with teleports and so forth - that you'll be tearing your hair out in anger rather than addictive frustration.

Unless, of course, you're a tenacious ten year old. They'll love it, I just liked it - and as for you? Who knows. It depends how many thousands of similar games you've played, basically. **Z**



Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb for Win 95)

Processor: P100 or better

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles

Controls: Keyboard

Score

79

Beautifully presented 3D shoot 'em up, but you've probably been there a squillion times before.

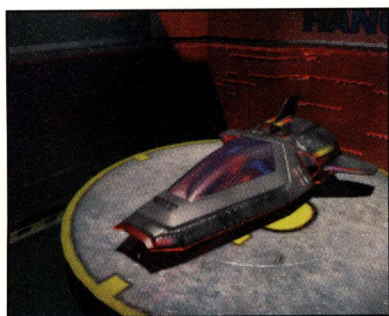
Price: £TBC **Release Date:** Out now

Publisher: GT Interactive

Tel: 0171 258 3791

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

(Left) A helpful red arrow shows you in which direction to shoot...



HMM... "PRESS SPACE," IT SAYS. Press space? Why? Why in Cliff Mitchelmore's name do I have to 'Press Space' when I've already done it three times? Sweet merciful heavens, I really hate console presentation methods. Be warned, Ocean, if I see the words "Press Button A" anywhere at all in this game I'm going to close down this review and start playing something else instead. Probably *Quake*. Or then maybe cutesy *Creatures*...

Calm down

Sorry, but it's a legitimate point. I've nothing against conversions *per se*, but I do take exception when the people responsible don't really bother to cater for the differing needs of each machine's respective audiences. *Tunnel B1* comes to us from the PlayStation and Saturn where it's a fairly nice, if somewhat bland, game. The premise is that in the overly technological Earth of the future, mankind has



(Above left) Take a good look because this intro sequence shot is the only time you'll get to see what it is you're driving, er, flying, er, hovering in... or whatever.

(Above) Time for a quiz. Study this picture closely and see if you can spot this month's Jesus In A Cloud! Answers on a postcard to S. Rushdie, 74 Peacock Drive, Fatwah, Essex...

seen the arms race escalate to the point where one mad dictator has developed the ultimate weapon. Enter you and your nippy little hover-car in a last-ditch attempt to stop him using it. This involves racing through various underground tunnels, shooting everything in sight – and, of course, not dying in the process.

On paper it sounds a lot like *Descent* – ultra-smooth 3D, flying through tunnels shooting the enemy, etc. In practice, it plays more like *Wipeout* or *Hi-Octane* (but without the sporting aspects). And it's in trying to be as faithful to the console original, rather than updating itself for the new requirements of the PC world, that it loses out. On the PlayStation *Tunnel B1* is a little gem of a game. On the PC it's somewhat unremarkable.

In perspective

Tunnel B1 is being pitched at the *Descent* and *Doom* market, but it fails to really capture the totally immersive mood of either. Instead it's more along *Wipeout*'s racing-with-guns line.

Descent 2

Hi-Octane

Wipeout

Tunnel B1

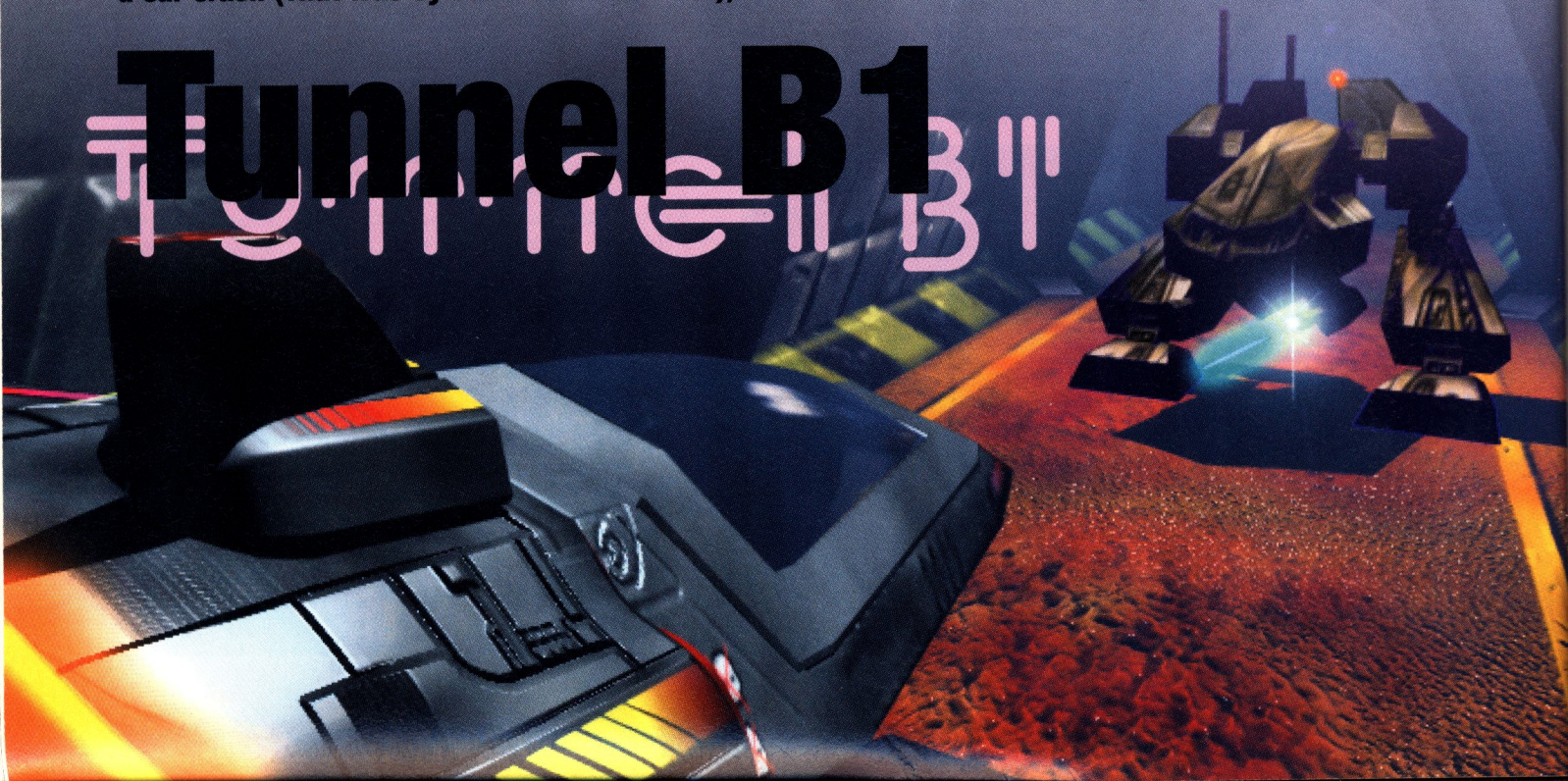
Why's that, then?

Well, for a start, there are no cockpit or external viewpoints. Instead you're just presented with the track and no point of reference. There's nothing to help you determine where the sides of your craft are, with the result that it's incredibly difficult, if not out of the question, to judge collision distances accurately. There are no crosshair or aiming cues to let you know what your guns are pointing at, meaning that accurate gunplay is an impossibility.

The only time you can save games is between levels, meaning that each time you die you are thrown right back to the start. *Très annoying* – especially when you've got right to the end of a bastardly hard level and then find that you have to do it all over again.

Paul Presley was once on a Channel Tunnel train that was due to be blown up in an IRA terrorist attack, he was once given a guided tour of London Underground's disused tunnel system near Mornington Crescent and he once saved a gaggle of commuters when the New York Island tunnel became blocked in following a car crash (*That was Sylvester Stallone - Ed.*), so he knows about tunnels, right?

Tunnel B1





But even worse are the controls. After cycling through all the on-screen options and leafing through the manual my worst suspicions were confirmed: you're given a pre-set keyboard configuration, with two rigidly defined alternatives: no user-definable keys, no mouse or joystick control and no *Descent*-style combinations. As a result, the keyboard controls fall victim to that most modern of keyboard diseases – Windows Key Interruptus (that's the one between CTRL and ALT on Windows 95 keyboards whose only function in life seems to be to prematurely throw you out of networked *Quake* matches at vital moments). You will be able to use a joystick on the Windows 95 only version due out in a couple of months' time which will improve the situation somewhat, but you could at least be given the option to re-define the keys in the DOS version.

Aside from all that, it looks lovely. The texture-mapping and light-sourcing are second to none. You even get a very

realistic-looking lens flare when you look at points of light. And the surprising thing is that it all moves along very smoothly... at least it does in the lower resolutions. If you flick to 640x480 SVGA mode then you do start to suffer from Frameicus

Updateitus (Excuse me Paul, but have you just swallowed a fake medical dictionary or something? – Ed.), even on a super swifty P120. But otherwise it looks great. The objects are highly detailed and the explosions are very satisfying. Sonically everything is top notch, right down to the CD audio musical tracks that

accompany the action. It's just that there's not really all that much cake underneath the pretty icing. Basically,

(Above left) That wooden crate? That explodes. That mine? That explodes. That giant barrel? You better believe *that* explodes.

(Above) Hmm, a locked gate. Oh, you reckon, it'll open if I shoot it? (Ooh, what are the odds? – Ed.)

(Above right) The only weapon sights you get are when locking targets for your missiles.

Tunnel B1 epitomises the very essence of so many PlayStation games – fantastic presentation married to simplistic gameplay giving birth to little long-term appeal. *Descent 2* is a far better tunnel-based action game. *Wipeout 2037* is a far better hovery-racing game and there are soon going to be more 'novelty' first-person driving games than you can shake a stick at. For all its gloss *Tunnel B1* just doesn't have enough depth to keep you at it into the wee hours. **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium 75

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major digital cards

Controls: Keyboard

Score

73

Looks pretty but I wouldn't marry it.

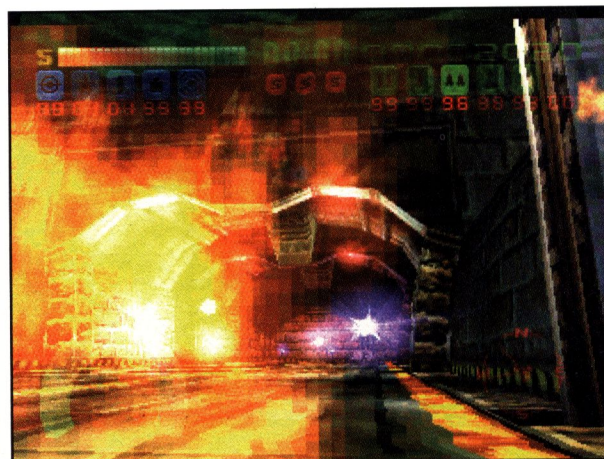
Price: £39.99 Release date: Out now

Publisher: Ocean

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(Below) As if to prove a point, Ocean's programmers have put light sources everywhere.



A little tip...

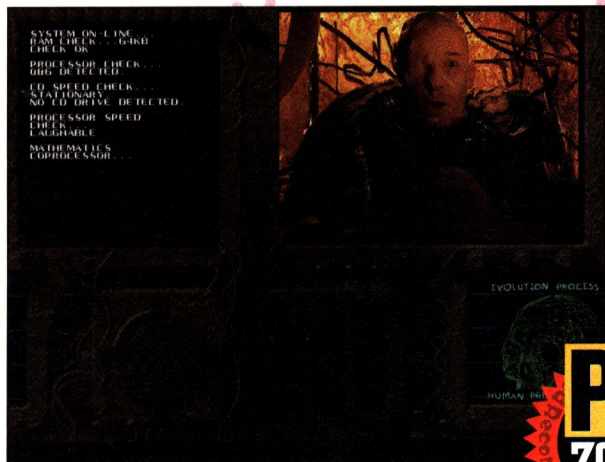
Okay, so perhaps I'm being a little snobbish with regards to *Tunnel B1*'s provenance. There's nothing wrong with PlayStation games *per se* (some of my best friends are PlayStation games), but when you consider how much more a PC is capable of offering in terms of depth of playability and variety of challenge (I'm starting to sound like Rhodes Boyson – stop it, Presley), then you can't help but feel short-changed. *Descent* is capable of matching *Tunnel B1*'s speedy action thrills and manages to create a far more believable 'world' at the same time. Okay, so the graphics are nicer, but who cares? Who really cares? When you're careering around a bend at 200mph are you really thinking, "Gosh those lens flares are pretty and look at that wall texture! Mavis, where's my camera?" Or are you thinking, "Die you motherf@%#ing hovery-helicopter type thing and take those @!%#ing mortar guns

straight back to the fire-encrusted hellpit from where you were born!"

So what's my advice? Well, the industry rumour mill has it that with Nintendo's great mother of a console beast about to arrive on these shores with all the subtlety and finesse of a two-ton elephant trying to tap dance, Sony are getting set to drop the price of the PlayStation to little more than £100. A hundred nicker. Four ponies or a fifth of a monkey. And no doubt the prices of the games will drop too (*Fat chance* – Ed.), so wait on a few months. To play most of the PlayStation games on the PC, you usually need to invest in various bits of hardware anyway (3D accelerator cards, joypads, etc), so save your money until the prices drop and then feast yourself on the great banquet of shallow foodstuffs that make up the PlayStation games market. And leave the real three-course meals to your good old PC. You know it makes sense.

Krush, Kill 'N' Destroy

Is that a general's baton you've got in your pocket? asks **Andy Mitchell**, or are you just pleased to see another real-time battle simulator for PC wargamers?



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SO THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE BEEN brought to. Generations of man's ingenuity and scientific research have in the end reduced the world to a radiation-scarred wasteland infested by mutants. And have we learned our lesson? Are the last survivors of humankind attempting to rebuild a new society that shuns war and the weapons of mass destruction? Do furred mammals defecate in heavily vegetated environments?

Out there among the wreckage, mankind is now locked in a deadly embrace with mutants who are hell-bent on taking over what little is left. Giant scorpions, behemoths fitted with plasma guns and shambling creatures wielding flamethrowers are breeding among the rubble – and they are waiting for you!

KKND is such a close clone of the original *Command & Conquer* game from

(Right) The Mutant's camp emphasises their interest in the nastier side of life, with a giant scorpion breeding pen and buildings decorated with the bones and skulls of crap PC gamers who couldn't cut it.

(Below) Yet again the classic defence involving a semi-circle of troops can take out superior computer forces when you use a fast outrider to lure foolish stragglers into its centre.

Westwood that it begs every comparison. The basic game structure is almost identical in that you must gather resources (in this case, oil) to provide the cash to construct the weapons and troops which you need to carry out your campaigns. Even the types of weapons and troops on offer are similar, with tanks, fast motorbikes, flamethrowers and grenade chucks. And yet again, you are given the wonderfully 'unique' strategy of converting enemy ground troops into squealing, squelching, red blotches by driving your heavy trucks over them.

Speed thrills...

The one distinguishing feature of KKND, however, is the speed at which things have to take place. Time is always of the essence and in each of the later levels you will have to develop very disciplined strategies to give your troops an edge on

In perspective

Command & Conquer was brilliant, *Z* was great, *KKND* is a good variation on the theme, but *C&C: Red Alert* is the best.

Command & Conquer

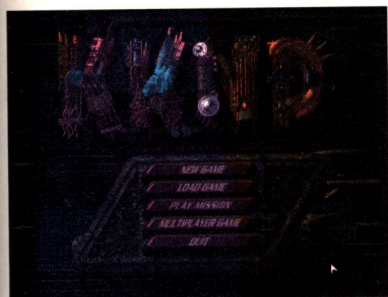
Command & Conquer: Red Alert

Z

KKND

the battlefield, or you can kiss your loyal little pixelled fellows goodbye forever. Unlike *C&C*, where you at least seem to be playing on a level playing field as far as men, ore and resources are concerned, in *KKND* the enemy camps produce waves and waves of





troops that endlessly attack yours, and there is no way you'll resist their onslaught if you simply go toe-to-toe with them. In many cases you must take the battle to the enemy as quickly as you can or you just won't complete the level. This means that the build, build, build strategies that prove so successful in *C&C* just won't work. You have to get in there with the forces you've got and wipe the enemy out as quickly as possible.

Although you need oil to build up your forces and there are few defences you can employ, you just can't afford to sit around building up your base. Basically, it's go forward or perish. In this respect, it's perhaps a bit more like the old classic *Cannon Fodder* than other *C&C* clones. A good thing? Maybe.

Guys & Trolls?

Just like in *C&C* you're given the option to play both sides of the coin and command either the Mutants or the Humans. There are 15 levels to be completed for each side, many of which have some novelty feature you must cope with (eg escorting a column of trucks down death alley, where your own trucks cannot be halted or slowed to give you a breather). Sound familiar?



(Above) Giant elephants and mutant scorpions spitting acid are just two of the delights about to hurl themselves upon your waiting troops. Don't shoot until you see the green of their eyes! It's round about now that you'd sell your soul for a few impregnable sandbags.

(Below left) Your first aim should be to find oil and get drilling. No oil means no money, and no money means no troops.

(Below) The Human's camp nestles next to the defensible river's edge. It's the usual set-up consisting of a Repair Yard, Vehicle Factory, Oil Rig, Command Post etc.



Are you stoopid?

Programming intelligence into a computer is no easy task at the best of times, but when it has to cope with all of the variables in a war game, things can get really tough. Yet it is in this department that games such as *KKND* must stand or fall. The simplest option for the game designer is to load the dice heavily in the computer's favour and give it overwhelming forces to throw at you. In this way the human player is forced to find the loopholes in the computer's logic and exploit them to win the level.

Players soon found that in Westwood's *Command & Conquer*, the computer could not cope with a simple defence line of sandbags and used this fact to protect themselves from the overwhelming attacks. The designers from Blizzard, who brought us *Warcraft*, made a mish-mash of the AI which meant that it was all too easy. *Z* suffered from wandering men, and *Blood And Magic* sported probably the least impressive display of computer logic, with an enemy who would happily camp in a volcano and not have the intelligence to get up and move when its arse caught light. So where does *KKND* fit into this picture?

In the early levels the enemy displays all the intelligence of a single-minded shark. That is to say that once the computer has set its sights on its intended victim it will pursue that target to the exclusion of all others. It will follow you out of the water, up the beach, across the pier and into the nearest pub. Meanwhile, it will ignore the 50 policemen who are beating it to death with truncheons! This fact makes the first few levels a walkover as you can lead enemy troops into prepared ambushes where they can easily be annihilated. Later levels are tougher, though, as then the AI seems to kick in and enemy troops will retreat and regroup if they figure out they are losing too many men. The computer also seems to have the unfair knack of producing troops out of nowhere and while you cannot get off the edge of the battle area, enemy troops seem to have the ability to walk on at any point – and at the most inconvenient moment! Basically, the AI works, but like all the games mentioned above, there's a lot of room for improvement.

Again, each side has slightly different weaponry, but there are a few omissions from the original *C&C* that I would have liked to have seen implemented. More imaginative weapons would be a start. Levels that you can actually interact with would be another. Although they are slightly 3D in that you can walk under bridges and the like, it would be nice to blow up a few trees and smash a few rocks as you can in *Z*.

Better than *C&C*, then?

In a straight shootout with other games of this type *KKND* rates highly. It's certainly equal to both of the *Warcraft* offerings, and with a few minor embellishments it would smash *Blood And Magic* into fairy dust. However, although *KKND* is a damn close run thing with the original *Command & Conquer*, it would get a bloody nose from *Red Alert* – the latest blockbuster from Westwood. There's nothing new or original in this game – if you've seen the others then you've seen this. On the upside, the game is well produced and

is certainly not a cheap rip-off rushed out to cash in on this popular genre. The levels, though a little samey, are well designed and will give you plenty of gameplay. After level five the difficulty is hard enough to make you struggle, but you know you'll succeed in the end if you can only keep your head and find each campaign's Achilles' heel. If you've finished *Red Alert* and want to keep that wrist action up to speed, then give *KKND* a go, but if you're only going to buy one *C&C* clone this year, make it *Red Alert*. **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium P66

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse

Score

85

Good but not a *C&C* beater.

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Very few people in the office were actually alive in World War One. Except **Patrick McCarthy**, who spent the period moaning about the good old days of the Boer War.



Flying Corps



(Above) The world's least amazing aerobatic display team.

(Above right) As soon as the English hit France, they built some really big pubs.

(Above far right) When Jürgen's tri-plane suddenly decided to become a bi-plane, he realised why people warned him against visiting Honest Heinrich, the used plane salesman.

LET'S FACE IT, IT COULDN'T HAVE been much fun being alive, young and male during the First World War. You couldn't walk down the street without being bombarded with abuse and hit over the head with carrier bags full of white feathers. Eventually you'd give up and go off to war. If you were one of the lower classes, you'd spend your time standing up to your chest in fetid, crap-filled water, your limbs slowly rotting away, watching your chums go floating past face down, until the day you were ordered to bayonet-charge a machine-gun post by a 90 year-old headcase sitting snug in the drawing room of some chateau, 300 miles away.

Summoning a huge effort, you'd drag your disintegrating carcass out of the trench, get a hail of bullets in the face and die. If you were one of the upper classes, you'd probably try to get out of all that and join the Royal Flying Corps to have



a romantic time of it, swanning about in leather gear, snogging with chicks and drinking champagne cocktails. But after a few days of this you'd have five minutes of training, and it was up into the air in a glorified lawnmower with wings before, 17 seconds later, a German with a fancy name would fly along and you'd get a hail of bullets in the face and die.

Either way, you're probably better off being alive these days. Especially (crap link alert) now that Empire's rather lovely *Flying Corps* is with us. If you've seen the news pieces or the booklet we did on it, you'll already know a fair bit about it already – but I'll go through it all again for those who haven't been paying attention.

The campaign trail

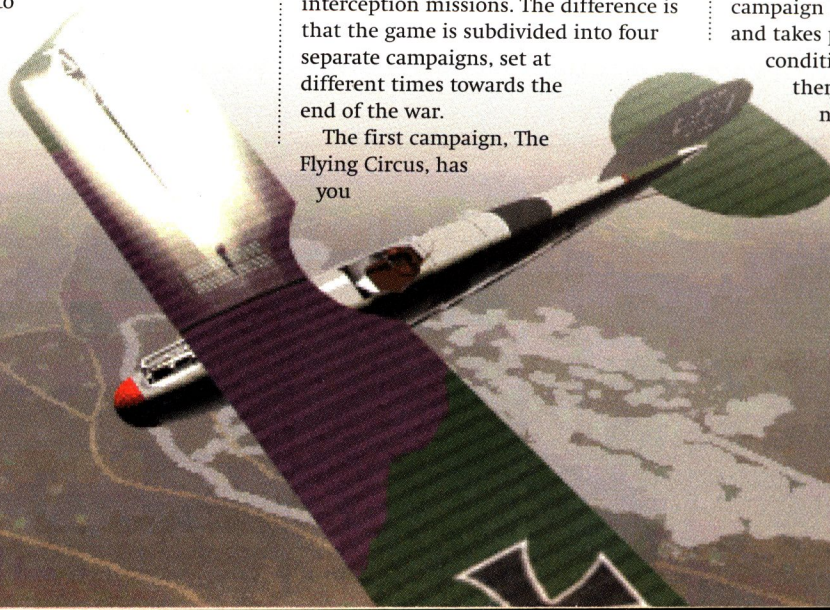
The principles of the WWI flight sim have changed little over the years, and the mission types available to you will be familiar to anyone who's played one before. There are patrols, balloon bursting, ground attack, escort and interception missions. The difference is that the game is subdivided into four separate campaigns, set at different times towards the end of the war.

The first campaign, *The Flying Circus*, has you



playing Lothar von Richthofen, the Red Baron's brother. Big brother's on leave suffering from RSI in his trigger finger, leaving you in charge of the squadron. Your task is to beat his record number of kills in the month you're in charge. The second, *The Battle of Cambrai*, casts you as a German Jasta commander, trying to hold back hundreds of British tanks for three days. You've got to stop them taking Cambrai, partly because it's the centre of German operations, but largely because that's where you keep your string of high-class paramours. In *The Spring Offensive*, you're a rookie pilot, new to the Royal Flying Corps. After delivering an SE5a to your new chums, you'll be chucked in at the deep end against the Germans' all-out assault. And in *Hat in the Ring*, you have to try to emulate the exploits of American ace Eddie Rickenbacker, as you join in the war at the last minute and boast about how you saved the Allies for the rest of the century.

Each campaign gives you the chance to fly different planes, and each campaign has a wide range of missions and takes place in varying flying conditions. You won't finish any of them in a hurry, either. It's worth noting that throughout the campaigns, you can change your name. You don't have to be Richthofen,



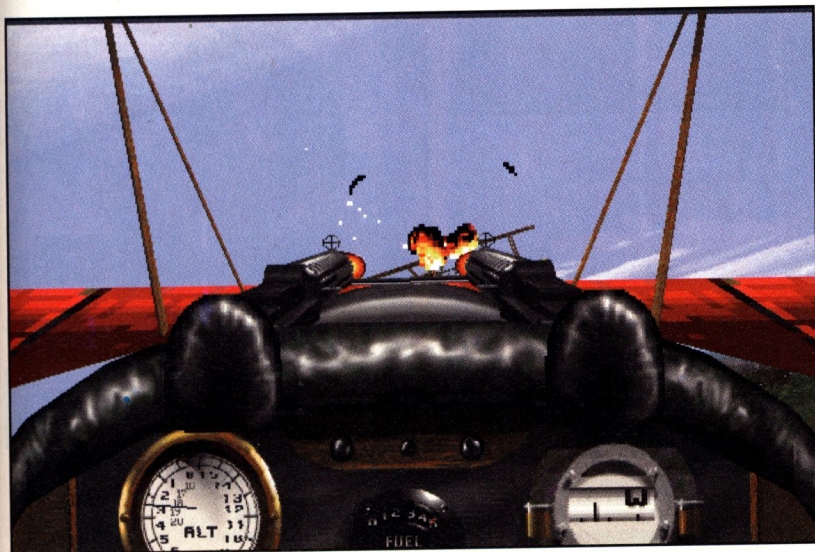


Rickenbacker or anyone else – so those of you with a good line in humorous German surnames should be well pleased. And if you don't want to bother with the campaigns there are a handful of quick-start, get-up-there-and-start-blasting type missions as well.

The planes, boss, the planes...

The planes available are the Sopwith Camel, Fokker DRI tri-plane, Nieuport 28, Albatross DIII, SE5a and Spad 13. But many more appear in-game, including the Be2c, Bristol F2A, DH9 and Sopwith Pup and Snipe on the Allied side, and the Fokker DVII, Halberstadt Dii, Pfalz D3 and Rumpler c on the German side. All the planes have been modelled from their original specifications, and each has its own flight model, from the super-fast, but not particularly manoeuvrable, SE5 to the super-slow and extremely fragile Nieuport.

It's less noticeable at the easier levels, but whack all the options to their hardest settings and the inherently unstable rotary-engined planes become flying nightmares if you move the stick too suddenly, plunging off at 90° to the direction you actually wanted to go. Great if you live long enough to get used to it – because you can perform ridiculous manoeuvres to impress chicks – but fatal for beginners. As for the Nieuport, the Hat in the Ring campaign is particularly tricky simply because you start with it. As well as being a rotary-engined jobbie, and thus about as predictable as Attila the Hun on crack, it was notorious for falling



Paint your wagon

Squadron leaders get all the bloody fun. Not only do they have fancy silk scarves, in-flight champagne and really big moustaches with which to playfully tickle their fellow officers' important little places, but they get to decorate their flying machines with fancy paint jobs. In two of the campaigns you have to earn this right, but in the other two you can do it right from the start. And you can decide which hideous colour combinations everyone else will be flying in, too. It has a practical side, in that if you give everyone in your squadron distinctive markings, they'll be easier to pick out in the middle of a scrap. But it's also absolutely ideal for humiliating anyone who happens to be better than you. What fun: "Morning, von Winkelkoch. From now on you'll be going up in this pink and yellow effort with Charles Hawtrey's smiling face on the fuselage."



apart if asked to do anything unreasonable (like turn around) in flight. You only have to break wind and your wings fly off. Now you know what Always Ultra users have to put up with.

She's breaking up, she's breaking up...

One of the best bits, in fact, is that the planes react as much as possible like they would in reality. Being made of a few sticks, some knotted-together hankies and a bit of bubble gum, bullets passed straight through most parts. And with the targeting settings at their hardest, they do in this game, too. You have to hit a fuel line, the engine or the pilot to bring them down. Cool. (If you're lazy, you can have it set on easy, and any hit makes the enemy's plane go up like it's been hit by a bazooka.)

Details, details

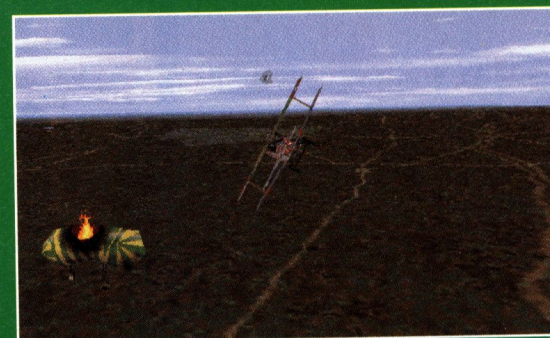
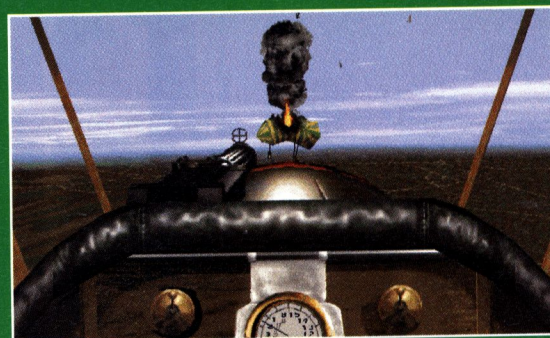
Throughout the game, the attention to detail is outstanding. Before taking off on a mission, you can check out the in-game map, clicking to cycle through the various targets, like opposition artillery positions, and friendly locations, like Mlle Fifi's House of Rubber, or whatever. If you want to play it authentically, you

can use this, and the real maps that come with the game, to plan your route. (If you can't be bothered, you can just take off and hit the auto-pilot button, and be whisked along until something exciting happens.) Each plane has a different cockpit and instrument layout, and every instrument works properly (unless you have the faulty compass option switched on). The sound effects are superb, sampled from the real things. Different planes actually

(Below left) Von Winkelkoch cold-bloodedly shot the wigs off the heads of the bald French dandies.

Balloon bursting for fun and profit

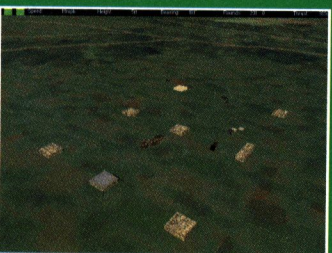
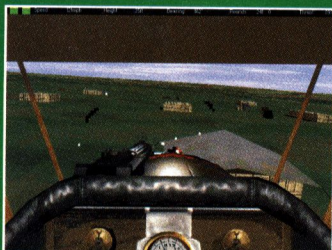
Nobody likes a nosy parker, especially when they're so blatant about it that they buy a great big telescope and peer into your bedroom from a gaudily-painted balloon. They're just asking for an incendiary bullet up the patootie. One of the nice touches in this is that if they see you coming, the observers bail out before you even start shooting. If you're an Allied pilot, remember your war comics, and resist the urge to shoot them as they dangle from the parachute. If you're German, just go for it.





Down & dirty

Ground attacks in the lightweight planes of WWI are a lottery in which it's only too easy to come a cropper. You might find yourself on the receiving end of a stray bullet as someone celebrates their first morning erection for several months by firing skywards, or simply get your wing caught on someone's arm as they try to hail a taxi. Here we see a young French pilot hurtling gleefully into the attack in his trusty Nieuport, only to find a casually discarded Bosch cigarette butt, flicked from the window of a tent, landing in his fuel tank. Seconds later, he's hurtling somewhat less gleefully into the ground, to become just another smear on the French landscape.



sound different – even different guns sound different: you can tell who's firing by the noise the gun makes, which is handy during a dogfight. The landscape graphics are taken directly from contemporary maps and charts (drawn up to a more accurate scale than present-day Ordnance Survey maps), and they're so good you can navigate by looking around and matching things up on your map. When you shoot tents up in a ground attack, little men run out and start taking pot-shots at you. Sometimes you'll see flocks of birds taking off as you fly low over trees. There are even supposed to be dogs running about in some camps.

Even the documentation that comes with the game is good. Admitting that you read a manual is like confessing that you're a Trekkie who speaks Klingon, or that you're an avid collector of darning needles, but this manual provides an interesting read, full of quotes and tips from pilots of the day. You also get a replica WWI flying manual, which is a really nice touch.



The height report

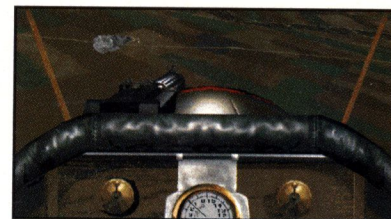
The one gripe about the game is that it's difficult to tell just how high you're flying when you get down low to the ground and you're using an external view. There's no shadow, and the ground effects start to break down into what look like gigantic carpet tiles. There's a toggleable info bar, however, which is a help, although purists may think it spoils the atmosphere to have it switched on. Without it, you can have some unnervingly bouncy landings, bad examples of which can lead to Unanticipated Curtailment Of Life Syndrome.



(Above left) Spiderman makes a rare outing as a WWI pilot.

(Above) The Hun ace was directly below him. Very quietly, Jenkinson opened his flies...

(Above top right) Jenkinson tried to pass undetected by flying very low. Unfortunately, he forgot about his enormous beehive haircut.



As far as multi-player facilities go, there aren't any at the moment, but there will be a patch in the near future which will provide network, modem and serial options, as well as a heap of 3D accelerator card stuff for people with them. And naturally, it will be on our cover disk, so you won't have to pay for it.

To get to the nub, basically it's a great game. It's graphically outstanding (but as you'd expect, processor hungry) and oozes atmosphere. Taking off early in the morning, in a little light fog, you sometimes feel like just flying around, looking about and listening to the engine. And then you get a hail of bullets in the face. Ah well... **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA/SVGA
(3D accelerated version imminent)

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Joystick, keyboard, rudders

Score

92

Eee, it's just like being there.

Price: £45.99 **Release date:** Out now

Publisher: Empire Interactive

Tel: 0181 343 7337

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

MS-DOS and WINDOWS95



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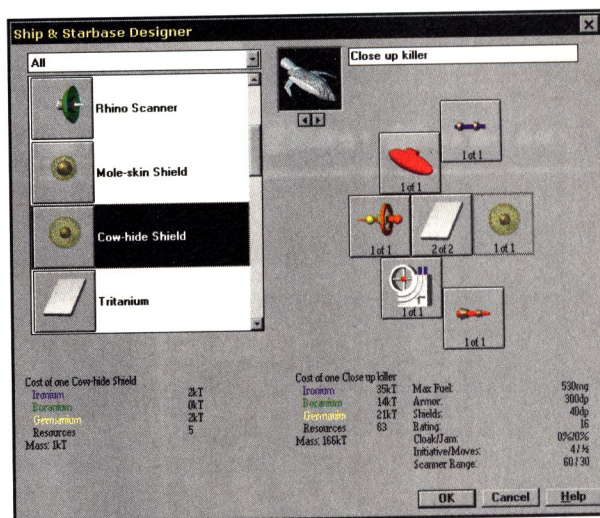
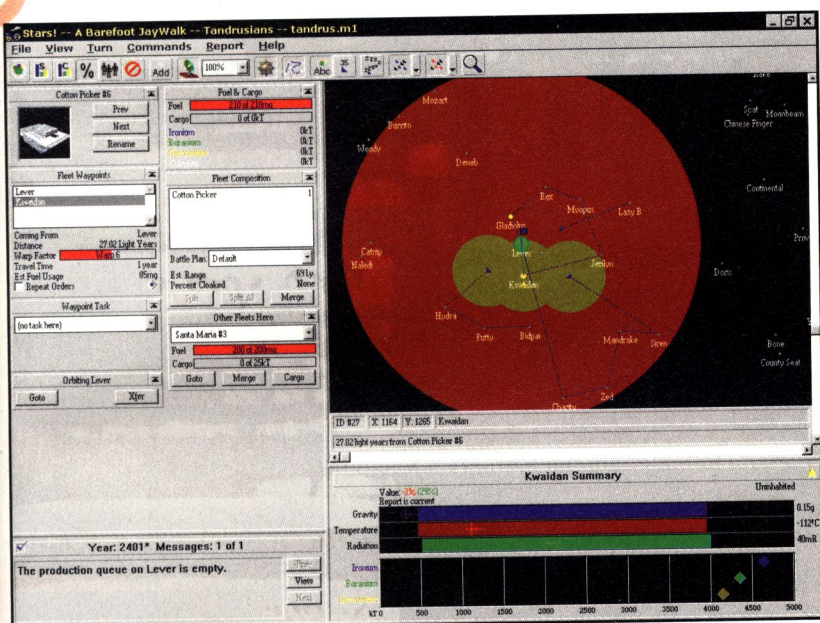
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Stars!

Andrew Wright knows when to quit. He asked for *Red Alert*. We said "bollocks". He asked for *Diablo*. We said it wasn't ready at the time. He asked for a cheque to tide him over Christmas. We gave him *Stars!* Snigger, snigger.



STARS! SOON BECAME HOT NEWS on the Internet when it was launched as shareware early last year. Whatever you think of people whose idea of a meaningful relationship is an e-mail address and a Web site, they're pretty hard to please as gamers. If it's big on the Net it's got to be worth looking at.

Stars! is a conquest-cum-strategy game, a kind of chess-meets-*Civilization* in deep space. It's also turn-based, allowing more in-depth strategic thinking, and as a result it's hot-seat, network and play-by-e-mail enabled for up to 16 people. Of course, it does all this without any power graphics and video cut-scenes but at least this means you can run it on an old 386 and earlier versions of Windows.

The game was developed by two ex-Microsoft employees and was quickly

branded the thinking man's network game. However, it soon became obvious that the artificial intelligence was light years ahead of anything comparable, which made it great for solo play too. In stepped Empire Interactive and the rest is history. Actually, at the time of writing, it's still in the future but you know what I mean.

This excellent AI means you can play against 15 other races and really have a battle on your hands. Not because the game is slanted towards the computer players, but because they use clever strategies and tricks to keep you on your toes.

Perhaps the best part is that you can play a long game before you realise you're just a speck in the universe and that any day the Klingons or whatever are simply going to annihilate you. At least you don't suffer the frustration

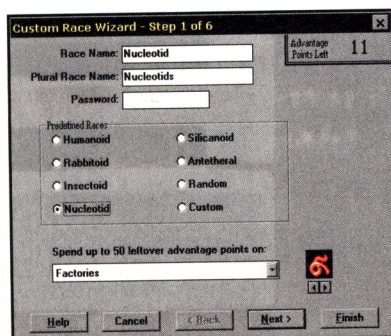
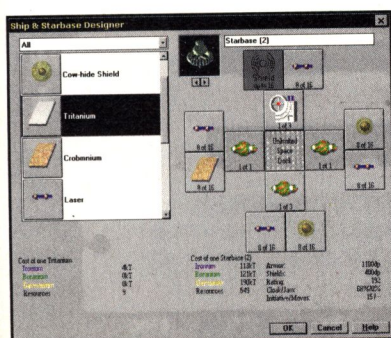
(Above left) The interface looks complicated at first glance but you can move each panel according to your preference and screen size.

(Above right) In the starship designer you drag and drop elements to create new hull designs...

of being wiped out quickly in your first few games.

Stars! is a fast-paced game and dead simple to play, but there's also a wide and subtle range of tactics available once you've mastered the basics. You can design and build not only starships and starbases, but entire races. Then you can send them out to discover and colonise new planets, research new technologies, manage the essential elements of the economy on each world, and defend your empire from the aggression of other players, whether they're human or computer-controlled.

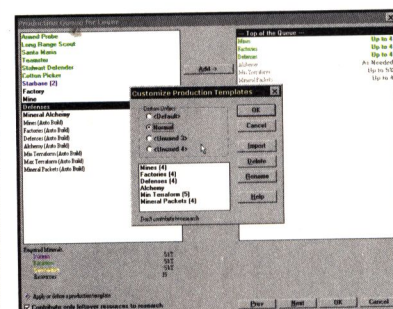
The game relies on the intricacies of micro-management. There's no arcade element to the game at all, although fleets do battle each other on a board-style map and various tactics have to be employed to win through. After the first couple of battles, though, most gamers switch that off too. Battles become common and all you want to know is whether you kicked ass or not and what you've got left to send out looking for other kickable asses.

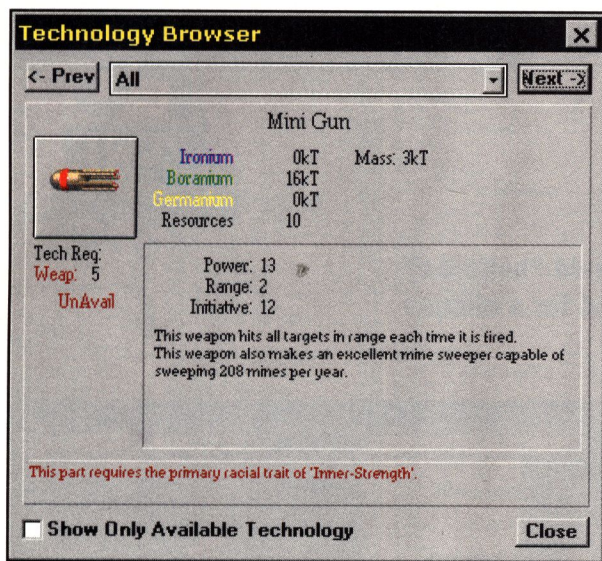


(Far left) ... and do the same for starbases.

(Left) Wonder what it's, like, saying, "Hi, I'm a nucleotid..."

(Right) You can create and save your own production templates.





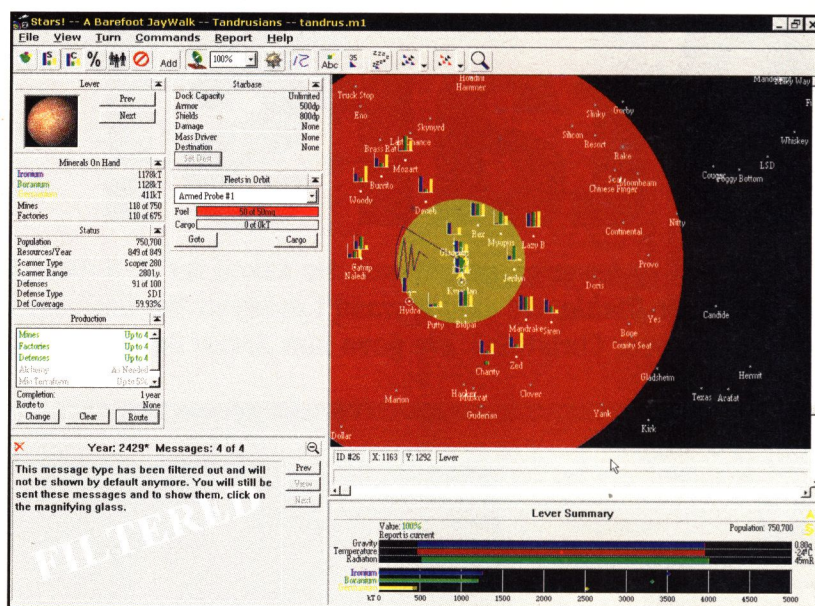
« To get the feel of the game, picture this. Your long-range scout ship has found a habitable planet. It will support your colonists. If it didn't you could always terraform it within certain limits. You build a mothership on your home planet, fill it with colonists and the right amount of fuel and send it on its way. You can tell it to colonise automatically on arrival and even add a default production queue so the planet starts to develop without any further input from you.

You might need more complex strategies still. If your opponent is active in the area, you might want to add a destroyer or two to the fleet for protection or add a cargo ship full of resources and fuel to give the planet a head start. You could also build mining ships to mine the planet and more cargo ships to transfer them from one planet to the other.

(Above) We could all do with a technology browser.

(Above right) If you get tired of the messages, you can always filter them out.

(Below right) A good candidate for mining – lots of minerals, no life support.



You can design all kinds of ships with all kinds of gadgets, from scanners, lasers and missile launchers, to fast drives and cloaking devices. There's also an elaborate packet transport system that enables you to fling packets of minerals around the universe, either to increase resources in one location or to damage the enemy. Packets can be intercepted with the right technology but can't contain fuel or colonists.

You can concentrate research on different fields, depending on how you want to play. Sometimes you can counter an aggressive opponent simply by improving your ships' speed and armour, so he can't get near you. Other times you'll want decent weapons to defend yourself or attack his bases.

Stars! has a brilliantly conceived in-depth play-as-you-go tutorial so you can get the most from the game right from the off. There's also a dedicated Web site at www.webmap.com/stars! and a dedicated Stars! newsgroup, rec.games.computers.stars. The 150-page manual is excellent too.

Stars! might be lacking in the graphical niceties of the late '90s but it is an extremely complex strategy game with a lot of long-term enjoyment on offer. It doesn't take long for it to become utterly addictive but it will take you a long time to tire of it. **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb

Processor: 386

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: Windows compatible sound card optional

Controls: Mouse

Score

82

Planets ahead of other space games.

Price: £29.99 Release date: Out now

Publisher: Empire Interactive

Tel: 0181 343 7337

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers



Get ready to rumble!

The Stars! combat system is simple. You choose a strategy for each fleet and watch what happens. It's just like a fight in a pub, really.

Maximise damage: For Arnold Schwarzenegger clones only. Lose your rag completely and hit anyone you see. You're so hard.

Maximise net damage: For nearly-hard cases. Hit everyone whenever you can but don't end up in casualty.

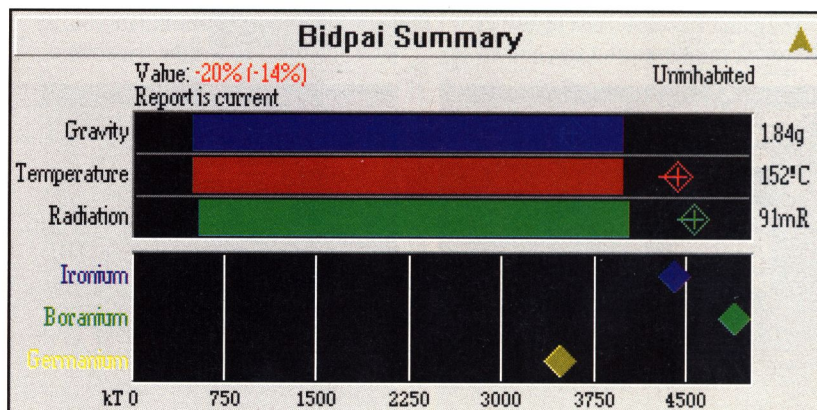
Maximise damage ratio: Look tough but from a good distance. If you can sling a glass half the length of the bar and hit someone, all well and good.

Minimise damage to self: Some good thinking starting to creep in here. I mean, you're no good to anyone with your head hanging off, are you?

Disengage if challenged: If you're over six foot and 14 stone, this is worth a try. Look threatening but piss off quick if he takes a step towards you.

Disengage: The sensible, non-heroic option. Attempt to run away as soon as possible – any exit will do, even the bog window. After all, you owe it to your mother, your girlfriend and the bloke who's buying your moped to stay in one piece.

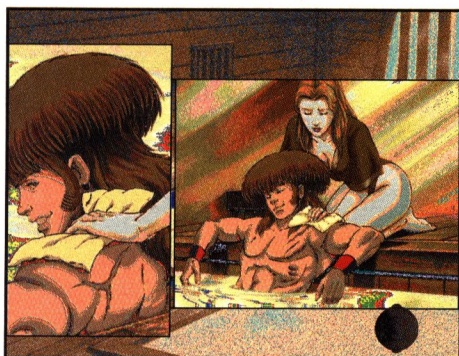
Dump cargo: It's not quite a strategy – more of an option really – but I wouldn't advise you to try it. Unless you can get away quicker without those last few pints, the curry and the peanuts, of course...



PICK N MIX

Another month, another Pick'n'Mix. **Charlie Brooker** rubs his eyes and blinks into the monitor's glare once again, as part of his ceaseless quest to play all the weird, mediocre, obscure or uninteresting tat he can lay his hands on. Why? Because we pay him to, knucklehead.

TAKERU – LETTER OF THE LAW



Master, why are you wearing a dead wombat on your head?

NOW HERE'S AN ODD ONE: *TAKERU'S* PACKAGING displays two telltale 'shit game' signs (which will be familiar to anyone who's sifted through as many cruddy games as I have) – the game runs on both PC and Mac and it makes extensive use of Apple QuickTime – but once you've got it up and running it's actually not too bad.

Mind you, it isn't really a game at all. What we have here is a piece of interactive Manga, in many ways quite unlike anything I've seen before. It's an electronic, animated comic strip (slightly more sophisticated than the old opening titles for *Grange Hill*), with the occasional interactive puzzle for you to solve along the way.

The storyline is utterly incomprehensible (the screenshot would have you believe the geisha-type bird is an undercover agent for the Ban Real Fur campaign), the English language voiceover displays little respect for the concept of lip-synching, and the conundrums wouldn't tax a goat – but nonetheless I kinda liked it. Still, I don't have to pay for these things. Hardcore Manga/Anime fans, check it out.

Publisher: Sunsoft
Tel: 0171 917 3864
Price: £TBC



SCORE: 62%

POWER F1

BIZARRE. AT FIRST GLANCE, *POWER F1* IS an enticing prospect. An officially-endorsed Formula One racing game, with a distinct bias for arcade-style user-friendliness and simplicity, it says 'ere. Sounds good, eh? And the graphics, while hardly cutting-edge, are agreeably smooth and nippy.

So what's wrong? The gameplay, buster, the gameplay. Amazingly, *Power F1* manages to turn high-speed, ultra-competitive professional motor racing into an unrelentingly bland exercise in



If this game wasn't so shit, it could have been good. Erm.

cornering, so devoid of thrills, spills, and chills that the player is in danger of falling asleep at the wheel. The end result is rather like one of those

cheap chocolate baubles that dangle enticingly from Christmas trees – they promise plenty of deep, self-indulgent satisfaction, yet beneath the paper-thin surface lies a hollow heart of nothingness. Which is a poncey and roundabout way of saying that this game isn't very good, really. A shame, since with a bit of tinkering here and there, it coulda been a contender

Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
Tel: 0181 780 2222
Price: £49.99
Internet: www.eidosinteractive.com

SCORE: 58%

DONALD IN COLD SHADOW



THE WORDS 'NINJA', 'HAWAIIAN' AND 'Donald Duck' have never been mutually suggestive... until now. Witness Disney's *Cold Shadow*, in which these elements collide

head-on. No, really. It's a platform game starring one 'Maui Mallard' (who looks like Donald, except he wears a Hawaiian shirt and he can morph into a ninja), fated to explore a haunted tropical island with only a gun (which fires bugs) and a big ninja stick for protection. With Disney at the helm you'd expect a polished product, and that's what you get. Despite exemplary animation, lush backgrounds, and ingenious design, this is hardly cutting-edge stuff, but it's good fun. Surprisingly, the difficulty level seems geared toward experienced players – wickle kids and ham-fisted elders may find it too frustrating. If you're a hardened *Mario*-head this could well turn your head. It's quite big, too.



Doh, can a creature with webbed feet really tiptoe?

Publisher: Disney Interactive
Tel: 0171 605 1413
Price: £29.99
Internet: www.disney.com



SCORE: 72%

SOULTRAP



Yup, there it is, life on the edge... of a cliff. Aaaaaagh!

WELCOME TO LIFE ON THE EDGE, WHERE you must face your greatest fears in order to survive a deadly nightmare world of distorted perspectives and hidden dangers..." Thus begins the *Soultrap* instruction manual, presumably

written by the same bloke who pens the scripts for trashy horror movie trailers. The game sees you taking control of the imaginatively-realised Malcolm West, "account executive with a major computer manufacturer", who's being sent round the twist by some scary nightmares, according to the diary-style introduction. Let the dull bastard suffer, I say, but sadly there's no option to do just that. Instead you must traverse a series of surprisingly tame 'nightmare worlds', jumping up and down and shooting a bit. In 3D. If you haven't got a 3D accelerator card (which supports Microsoft's Direct3D), it's unbearably ugly, not to mention unstable. The 'dreamstate' storyline seems little more than an excuse for the lack of any coherent theme or goal, its minimum spec is absurd, and – most damning of all – it's from Microforum (synonymous with the word 'Tagnuts' in my mental dictionary). In summary: no.



'Scuse me, but your flies are undone.

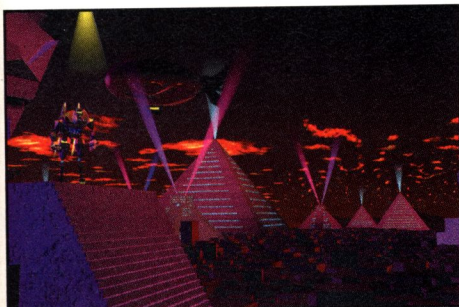
Publisher: Microforum
Price: £TBC
Internet: www.microforum.com

SCORE: 40%



CYBER GLADIATORS

3D BEAT 'EM UP FOR WINDOWS 95. AS IS *de rigueur* for this kind of caper, all the participants have exceedingly stupid names (which is probably why they're always getting into scraps). One of them is called 'Madam Discipline'



The in-game cat's-eyes are somewhat on the large side...



Someone's got their Jean-Paul Gaultier bra on back to front...

and has a special 'Foot Fetish' manoeuvre (*tell us what it is, then, you little teaser, you, or I'll take those stilettos back – Ed.*). Ahem, well, yes, it takes all sorts.

Anyway, the game itself is really only playable if you're lucky enough to have a 3D accelerator card lurking away inside your PC (without one it's offensively s-l-o-o-w). There's no doubt that with the correct hardware, it looks gorgeous; the gameplay, sadly, is somewhat lacking.

Despite a few novel features (such as the handy – and brutal – weapons intermittently thrown into the arena by the unseen audience), it fails to really grab the attention as well as it might. However, it's nice to see specific support for the new multi-button gamepads, and this is a step in the right direction – but my advice is to wait for the PC version of *Tekken 2*, a game which pisses over just about anything.

Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Tel: 0118 920 9100
Price: £37.99
Internet: www.sierra.com

SCORE: 64%



TOM CLANCY: SSN



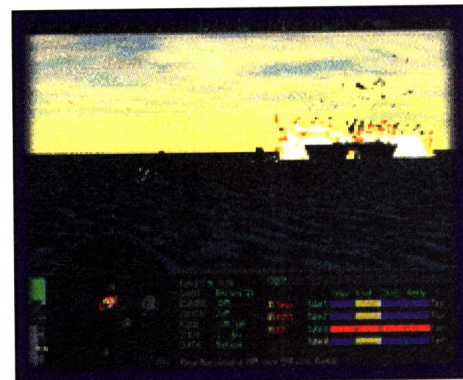
Yeah, and I'm not very good at submarine sim captions, either.

OH NO. HELP. HELP, ANYBODY? IT'S A submarine simulation. My least specialist subject in the world (after fishing simulations, that is). As the name suggests, this one is officially endorsed by Tom Clancy (indeed,

his name is the most prominent element on the packaging). What next? Gabriel Garcia Marquez presents Bubble Bobble? Vikram Seth's Best of Microsoft Entertainment Pack? A ridiculous affair. Anyway, *Tom Clancy: SSN* is slow and boring enough to cut a convincing 'sub', although upon closer examination it's neither as detailed nor realistic as the market leaders.

The inclusion of reel upon virtual reel of sleep-inducing FMV intro sequences and cut-scenes would appear to support my suspicion that this game is aimed at casual dabblers rather than hardcore sub-heads – and as such is unlikely to truly satisfy anybody.

And besides, if you really want to find out what it's like to be submerged for three hours, while nothing very exciting happens, why not just stick your head in a bucket? Eh?



The submarine's *raison d'être* – to torpedo surface vessels.

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Interactive
Tel: Virgin, 0171 368 2255
Price: £29.99
Internet: www.clancysn.com

SCORE: 60%



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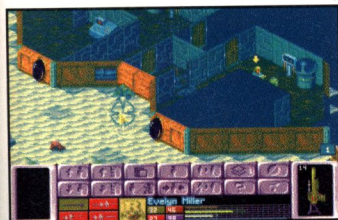
THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS INFORMED WHETHER GOODS ARE

Budget Games

(cut here for free badge!)

And the Squeaks did cluster about The Lord, saying, "Give us Thy cut-price okra bargains, O Great Hairy-Arsed One In The Sky..." And The Lord cried: "I only deal in cut-price quality software! Any more okra-orientated pestering and I'll give you a Lady's Finger." (From the Gospel according to **Patrick McCarthy**.)

X-COM: Terror From The Deep



Why, you murdering pond-scum, you!

FIRST THERE WAS *UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN* – to many, a lifestyle experience only marginally less enjoyable than sliding naked down a large velvet tussock, or pulling the heads off small rowdy children in bus queues and belabouring them with golf clubs. And then MicroProse begat the mighty *X-COM: Terror From The Deep*, and the universe felt a strange shifting sensation in its fundament.

"It's hugely different," claimed its legions of fans. "It's exactly the same, but underwater," claimed a lone voice from the back. "No, it's not," cried the

now enraged and scary mob. So the lone voice quickly shut up. Yes, it has the same turn-based combat, and yes, it has the same brain-sapping resource management and empire building. But no, it's not the same, because it's much harder. And yes, it's all underwater, which means... er... electric weapons have to be shelved in favour of weapons made of wood, or something.

And no, the aliens aren't exactly the same. These particular blobs of jelly-like murdering pond-scum are wildly different blobs of jelly-like murdering pond-scum than those seen in the original game. Oh and by the way, it's more addictive than crack. Turn-based strategy combat games in the late 20th Century: Discuss.

Publisher: Powerplus 01454 893893
Price: £12.99

SCORE: 94%

Grand Prix Manager



Three of the odd bugs you'll find in the game.

GOT AN ANORAK? A PROPER anorak, with diamond-stitched patterns on the outside, a pointy hood with a drawstring around its rim, and manufactured from a type of nylon so inflammable you only have to walk past a radiator to look like a publicity shot from the Spontaneous Human Combustion Club of Great Britain? Goo-ood. Do you wrap yourself in a Union Jack when you sit in front of the TV on Grand Prix weekends? Goo-ood. Here's a game that will suit you down to the ground. (Unlike the anorak, which

only suits you down to your navel, because you've been wearing it since you were six.) It lets you take over the GP team of your choice, re-naming it and its drivers as wittily as you like, before plunging into the extremely complicated task of running the world's fastest advertising hoardings.

Take charge of everything from arranging tyre deals and team sponsorship, to researching and developing better cars, hiring and firing drivers and engineers, and making travel arrangements to Italy to answer charges of culpable homicide. The game's menu system is more complicated than disentangling a bucket of ringworms, but it's worth a look if you're too tight to buy the new version and can live with the odd bug.

Publisher: Powerplus 01454 893893
Price: £12.99

SCORE: 75%

Colonization



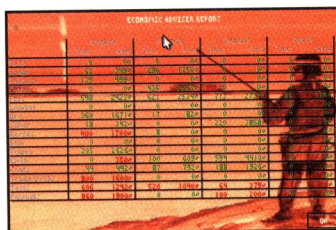
Your chance to design the San Andreas fault.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE THE person responsible for creating America, land of in-bred right-wing Christian pressure groups, deliberately mispronounced herbs and the world's most grossly overweight people? Or, to put it another way, how would you like to be the person responsible for creating America, land of *The Simpsons*, Hathaway from *ER* and Russ Meyer? Either way, *Colonization* lets you do that. Basically, it's a themed version of *Civilization*, which came out before *Civ 2* as an attempt to make a quick buck from the people who were gagging

for the true sequel. Taking control of the Dutch, Spanish, English or French (in descending order of cleanliness) you basically do all the usual *Civ* things, but with the prospect of attaining independence at the end of it and never having to drink tea again. (If you have enough of an army and navy to fight the motherland.) Good stuff.

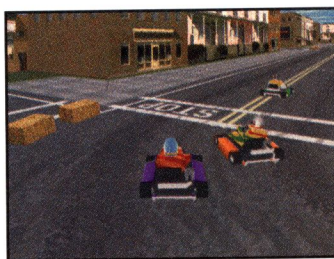
Publisher: Powerplus 01454 893893
Price: £9.99

SCORE: 90%



Blimey, Daniel Day-Lewis gets in everywhere.

Virtual Karts



Extra points if you hit Patrick's mother...

WHEN I WAS SIX, I SPENT THE whole year asking my Mother for a pedal car for Christmas. I didn't want anything else. I had visions of driving off down the shops in it, with the cat and the dog on the back seat, cruising the local High Street, popping my hydraulic suspension units, my hair in a hair net, a powerful pistol tucked in my elastic belt with the snake buckle. Something like that. On Christmas Day, I raced downstairs and there it was: a big red pedal car. I jumped in and pedalled delightedly round the room, only mildly

miffed at the lack of hydraulic suspension. My Mother came in. "Thank you for the pedal car," I chirped. "That's your brother's. That tricycle's yours," she chirped back. I've been a bitter, twisted bastard ever since. If games were those presents, *Virtual Karts* would be the tricycle. The pedal car would be *Superkarts*. This isn't quite the same. Excuse me, I have to blow my nose... **Z**

Publisher: Powerplus 01454 893893
Price: £9.99

SCORE: 50%



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Descent 2.....	EN/A	£22.99	Jefffighter 3.....	EN/A	£29.99	Rama Win95.....	EN/A	£34.99	Steel Panther Data.....	EN/A	£14.99	Zig & Zag.....	EN/A	£12.99
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Championship Manager 3

January 1997

C++ Programmers Required

Eidos Interactive are now looking for two experienced C++ programmers to work with Paul & Oliver Collyer on Championship Manager 3 in a pleasant Central London location.

Applicants should have considerable experience in the games industry, and programming skills of the highest calibre to work on this new game.

An interest in football, and in particular Championship Manager would be a definite advantage.

Please send CV's to Rob Groves at: Eidos Interactive,
Ferry House, 51-57 Lacey Road, Putney,
London SW15 1PR. Telephone: 0181 780 2222.

robgroves@aol.com

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3D Explosion!

Part 1



Having been inundated with e-mails and letters from readers asking which 3D card they should buy, we asked **Chris Anderson** and **Dave Mathleson** to evaluate them all and report back to us with their findings. To say it was a bit of a nightmare for all involved is something of an understatement. In this, part one of an on-going feature, we introduce you to the scary and confusing world of 3D acceleration.

3D IS COOL, 2D AND 1D SUCK. That's right everyone, it's official. Ever since the first squillionth of a second after the Big Bang, the Universe has been three-dimensional (well, apart from time, or something like that), which is why *Quake* is scary and realistic and *Frogger* isn't.

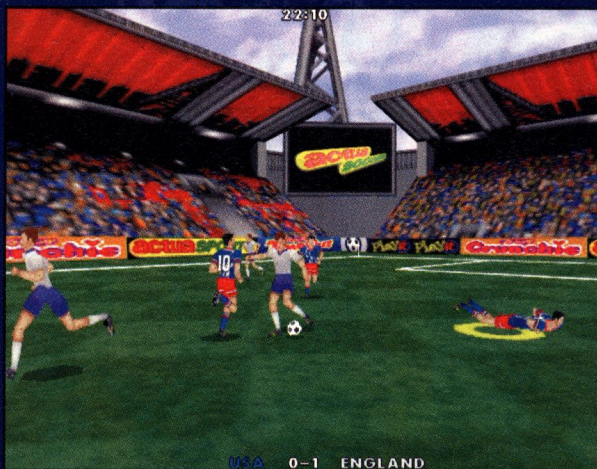
The reason why PlayStation and arcade games like *Sega Rally* look so much smoother than their PC equivalents is essentially down to their use of dedicated hardware to speed things up. Since the calculations involved

3D Explosion!

in 3D graphics are quite specific, hardware can be built that's optimised to carry out these calculations alone. This technology is now finding its way to the PC in the form of 3D accelerator cards, so there's finally some real hope that PC owners will be able to stand tall, look their console cousins in the eye and declare proudly, "My games set-up makes yours look like pool!"

The more observant among you will have noticed that we reviewed the first 3D cards ages ago. You'll also probably remember that the Diamond Edge and Creative Labs 3DBlaster (the VESA bus version, which is completely different from their current PCI card) both had their good points. Unfortunately though, their bad points were serious enough to make sure that they didn't take off: the 3DBlaster would only work with machines (486s) that were too slow for decent hi-res graphics, while the Diamond Edge had poor 2D performance. As well as that, as the first products on the market they were doomed by a lack of support from games companies. This is still an issue, but Direct3D (see panel below) makes it less of an issue.

The various cards on test here are a lot better for several reasons. Firstly, while most of them are combined 2D/3D cards designed to replace your graphics card completely, they're decent enough when used for 2D games as well, so there's no big drop in performance when used with the software already installed. Secondly, for punters who are happy with their current set-up, some cards are actually 3D 'co-processors' that'll work alongside existing 2D cards. Finally, 3D hardware has improved over the past year, so these cards are all quicker than their predecessors.



(Above) Play Actua Soccer in glorious hi-res without the jerko-vision. Just don't expect the players to stay on their feet.

MMX

Apart from all the jolly exciting speed improvements that 3D accelerators will bring, there's another technology on the way that should make jerk-o-vision a thing of the past. Intel's MMX (the 'MMX' doesn't stand for anything, fact fans) is an extension to Pentium architecture designed to speed up all the good things in life, like graphics and sound.

MMX Pentiums have extra instructions that can manipulate bigger chunks of data at once. As with 3D hardware, however, software has to be specially written to take advantage of these capabilities. MMX chips also speed up existing software slightly, as Intel have doubled the on-board cache size from 16K to 32K. This in itself gives performance increases of up to 30%, but Intel claim improvements of up to 500% for MMX-specific software.

There's no hard information on MMX games yet, but since every PC will use the technology in a few months' time, developers are bound to take notice.

Future support

Contact any card manufacturer and they'll happily provide you with a massive list of games developers and titles that their card will support. In reality, though, this 'support' comes in various guises, from full games specifically written for a particular chipset through to vague promises about future Direct3D support.

Fortunately, it doesn't always take much to make a game work with a particular card: the programmers often only have to re-write certain chunks of the game code itself. A typical game on CD consists of a couple of megabytes of code at the very most, the rest being filled up with animation, video clips

and data for textures, sounds and the like. This means that – in theory, at least – it shouldn't be too much hassle to provide upgraded versions.

This is perfectly illustrated with the 3DFX upgrade patch for *Tomb Raider*. The patch itself simply replaces the *Tomb.exe* file that's already there, and since it's under a megabyte, takes sod-all time to download from the Web. EIDOS have definitely done the right thing here, since this version of *Tomb Raider* has easily the best graphics of any PC title, which helps sell both copies of the game, and the cards themselves.

Another manufacturer using the same strategy is id, who've developed two accelerated versions of *Quake*. The first of these, *VQuake*, is a patch that works with the Rendition chipset, the one used by the PCI version of the 3DBlaster. As with *Tomb Raider*, this can be downloaded for free from the Internet, and it works with both the shareware and full versions of *Quake*. Plans for a Direct3D version of *Quake* have been shelved, and id are now developing an OpenGL version instead. What this means in practice is that you'll be able to play it on 3DFX cards (the Orchid Righteous 3D and Diamond Monster 3D), but probably not on any of the lower-spec cards around.

DiD are also providing a free patch for *EF2000:TactCom*, the DOS version (not the Windows 95 *Super EF2000*). This

Direct3D


Each of the different cards on the market use one of a variety of chipsets to do all the clever 3D stuff. To use the card's features, games have to be re-written for each individual card, using instructions specific to each one. Obviously, card manufacturers want to make it as easy as possible for software companies to use their product, so they provide them with sophisticated APIs (application programming interfaces) to ease the transition.

Most of the instructions that work with each card are fundamentally the same, differing only in detail, but most manufacturers have also added extra effects that aren't always implemented by the opposition, which of course further screws up compatibility.

Direct3D, or D3D for short, is a hardware-independent API developed by Microsoft that's designed to let games developers write games using a single set of instructions that'll work on any compliant card. All a card manufacturer has to do is provide drivers that convert the instructions used by their card to Direct3D ones, although this extra level of translation slightly affects performance. This 'common denominator' approach also means that some of the fancier effects provided on some cards may be ignored.



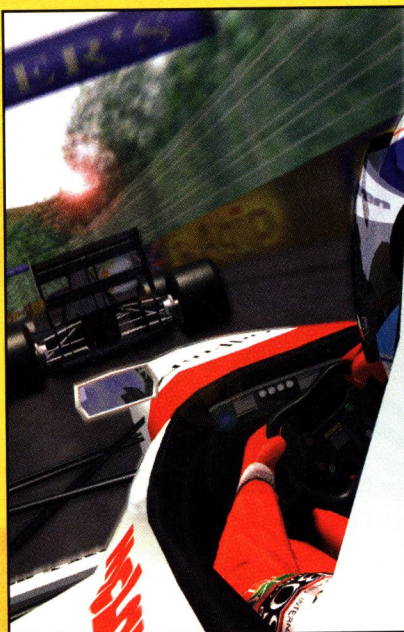
The majority of software houses have yet to get off the ground as far as 3D goes. We spoke to the bods at Psynosis to find that, at least as far as they're concerned, the 3D party has started in earnest.



“There will definitely be a 3Dfx version of *F1* at retail, but future Psygnosis games will be written to support more generic formats such as Direct3D, unless a particular game is bundled with one of the cards, in which case we'll write a version specifically for that card. You can be sure, though, that all our new games will support these cards in one form or another. This is part of our strategy to bring Psygnosis to the forefront as a fully-fledged PC developer, as traditionally we have been known mainly as a console developer.”

Does this mean that Psygnosis will be forerunners of the PC 3D revolution in the same way that they gave massive support to the PlayStation when it was launched? Dominic Mallinson, technical director at Psygnosis, seems to think they'll be up there with the big boys when 3D cards become the norm.

Bold words indeed, and on the evidence of the company's considerable efforts to kick-start the 3D revolution, we're confident they'll continue to produce awesome 3D titles like *F1* and *Wipeout 2097* for the PC throughout the year, alongside several titles developed natively on PC. Check out the May issue of *PC Zone* for an exclusive report on all Psynosis' new products which will be hitting retail at the end of this year.



3D Explosion!

We stuck every 3D card worth having into the office PCs. We gave them a Direct3D test. We played the games that came with them. We looked at the boxes they came in to ascertain whether or not they were aesthetically pleasing. Then, we rubbed our chins a lot and concluded thus...

ATI 3D XPRESSION

Developer: ATI
Tel: 01235 833666
Price: £119



with (among others) *Wipeout*, *Actua Soccer*, *Assault Rigs* and the ubiquitous *MechWarrior 2*.

In terms of speed, the ATi is one of the slower 3D cards currently available, and this shows with the unremarkable performance of the games. However, ATi have provided a TV output from the card, which gives a good enough picture for games, but obviously not for Windows work.

Pros: TV out for big screen entertainment

Cons: 3D performance is pretty slow

THIS IS THE UPDATED VERSION of this card, the original of which was one of the first of the current generation. The Rage II chipset handles both 2D and 3D and it's used by some large PC manufacturers, notably IBM. The card comes bundled

ORCHID RIGHTEOUS 3D

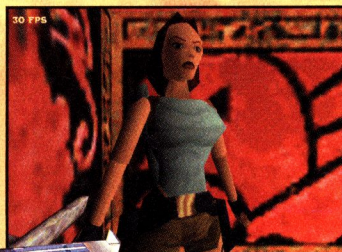
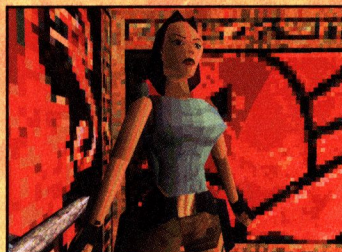
Developer: Orchid **Tel:** 01256 479898 **Price:** £287

THE RIGHTEOUS 3D IS A 3D-ONLY card, which means you'll need another card for 2D stuff. It takes up a single PCI slot and connects to your existing card via an external cable. Driver installation is simple, and an extra couple of tabs are added to your Display Properties that let you tinker with refresh rates and colour balance.

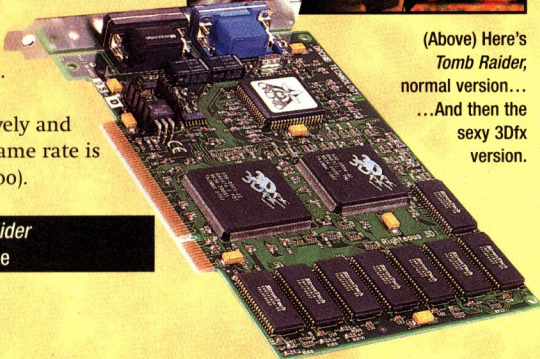
The Righteous' 3Dfx Voodoo chipset flies along, as the Direct3D score proved, and the bundled games, *Descent 2*, *Fatal Racing*, *Actua Soccer: Semifinals* and *MechWarrior 2* are all the best versions around.

Best of all, though, is the 3Dfx version of *Tomb Raider*, available as a free patch for existing owners. The textures look stunning, Lara's lovely and smooth, and the frame rate is great (even on a P100).

Pros: *Tomb Raider*
Cons: The price



(Above) Here's *Tomb Raider*, normal version...
...And then the sexy 3Dfx version.



DIAMOND MONSTER 3D

Developer: Diamond Multimedia **Tel:** 01189 444400 **Price:** £206

THE MONSTER 3D IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME as the Orchid Righteous, and its 3Dfx chipset performs identically. The difference is in the bundled software, and Diamond have included VR Soccer, a version of *Actua* for the US market that has players with stupid made-up names. This is the best soccer game we've seen on the PC graphics-wise, better than the 3DBlaster version of *Euro 96*.

The Monster 3D also comes with a limited version of *EF2000*, containing only the Quick Combat missions. This is prettier than the original, and the frame rate is higher, although not as much as we'd hoped.

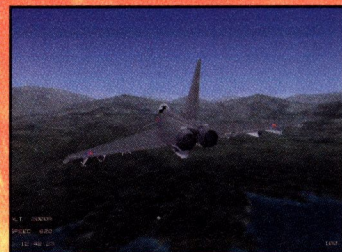
(Below) The Diamond comes with a stripped-down version of *EF2000*.



Where the Monster 3D scores over the Orchid is in the price - it's as much as £50 or so cheaper. This has to make it currently the best 3D accelerator on the market.

Pros: Everything

Cons: You don't get free accelerated versions of every decent game currently available



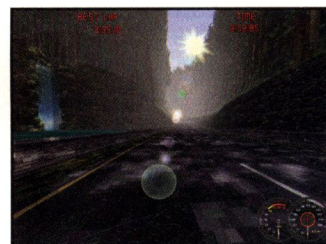
VIDEOLOGIC APOCALYPSE 3D

Developer: VideoLogic
Tel: 01923 260511
Price: £187

LIKE THE TWO 3Dfx CARDS, the Apocalypse 3D card is a 3D-only co-processor. Unlike them, however, it uses the PCI bus to pass the 3D information to your existing graphics card, so there's no external cabling.

In our Direct3D tests the Apocalypse's PowerVR chipset flew along, roughly matching the 3Dfx. It doesn't come with as much software, only *MechWarrior 2* (wow!) and *Ultimate Race*. *MechWarrior* looks nice enough, but *Ultimate Race* is a classy, near arcade quality racer. The lighting and fog effects of the PowerVR look particularly lush, boding extremely well for future releases.

There are a couple of drawbacks, however. Firstly, the Apocalypse 3D

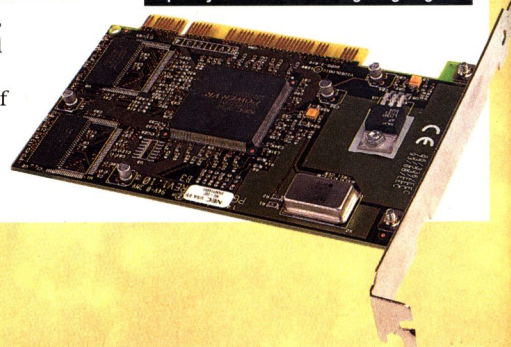


(Above) *Ultimate Race* really shows off PowerVR's lovely lighting effects.

needs a heftier PC than other cards, and 16MB of RAM is only just enough to play *Ultimate Race*. Also, the PowerVR doesn't do texture filtering, which means that close up, texture maps can look blocky.

Pros: *Ultimate Race* - the best looking driving game on the PC by miles

Pros: It needs a fast PC with plenty of RAM before it gets going



CREATIVE LABS 3DBLASTER PCI

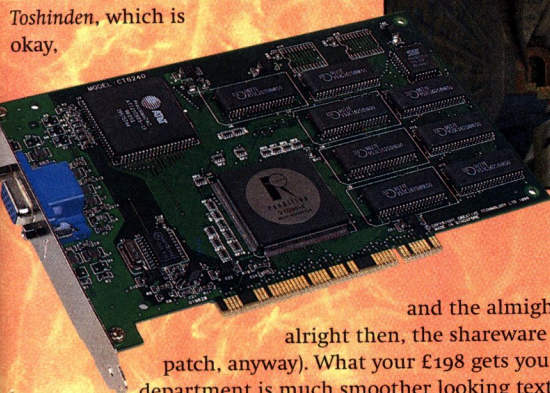
Developer: Creative Labs **Tel:** 01245 265265 **Price:** £198

CREATIVE ARE CLEVER PEOPLE, AND they know plenty about setting hardware standards. The 3DBlaster uses the Rendition Verite chipset, a combined 2D/3D product. The 2D performance of this card isn't brilliant, but it's fine for Windows dabbling. 2D performance is better than VIRGE VX cards, but not on a par with 3Dfx or PowerVR.

The Blaster comes with *Flight Unlimited*, which looks lovely, *Toshinden*, which is okay,



(Above) The awesome *Quake* – accelerated! Nice.



and the almighty *Quake* (well, alright then, the shareware version and a patch, anyway). What your £198 gets you in the *Quake* department is much smoother looking textures and a higher frame rate. Given the number of *Quake* heads out there who'd kill their pets if they thought it would give them a higher frame rate, Creative must have a bit of a winner.

Pros: Smoother, faster *Quake* **Cons:** Mediocre 2D performance

MATROX MYSTIQUE

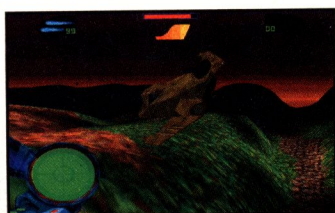
Developer: Matrox
Tel: 01793 441100
Price: £141

EVER SINCE THE MILLENNIUM came out, Matrox have been synonymous with speedy graphics cards. While that card had a few 3D functions built in, they were crap and not worth mentioning. The Mystique is a completely new card, and it uses Matrox's very own MGA1064SG 2D/3D chipset.

It's no surprise that the Mystique is no slouch in the 2D department, and it's nearly as fast as the Millennium. 3D is also pretty good and Direct3D performance is nearly up to 3DBlaster levels.

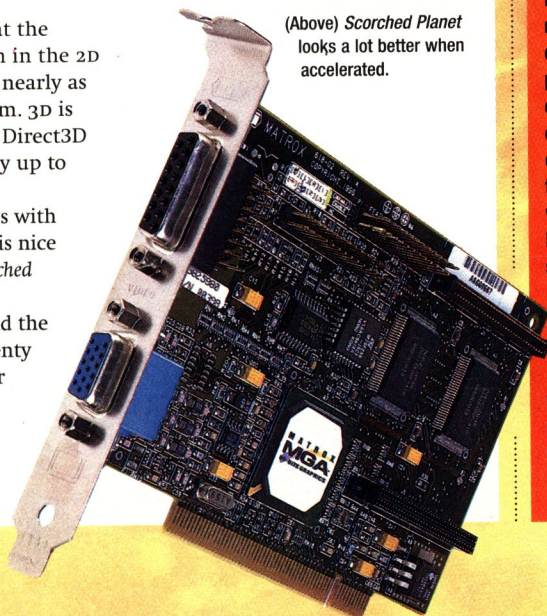
The Mystique comes with *MechWarrior 2*, which is nice and smooth, and *Scorched Planet*. This is a pretty decent 3D shooter, and the Mystique provides plenty of enhancements over the unaccelerated version.

Added to that, the Mystique's 2D



performance is worth the asking price alone. Throw in decent 3D, and you've got a bargain.

Pros: Excellent 2D and good 3D
Cons: Not as good at 3D as some of the other cards



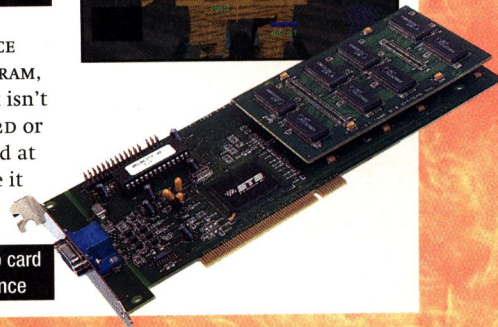
(Above) *Scorched Planet* looks a lot better when accelerated.

STB VELOCITY 3D

Developer: STB
Tel: 0181 897 1003
Price: £159

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT PRICE for a card with 4MB of VRAM, but the VIRGE VX chipset isn't particularly speedy at either 2D or 3D. This card isn't really aimed at the gamer, and the only game it comes with is *MechWarrior 2*.

Pros: Very cheap for a 4Mb card
Cons: Mediocre performance

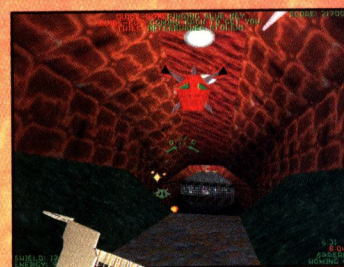


HERCULES TERMINATOR 3D

Developer: Diamond Multimedia
Tel: 01189 444400
Price: £206

LIKE THE STB CARD, THE Terminator 3D is fitted with the newer VIRGE VX chip. Performance did prove slightly better than the STB, which probably indicates better drivers.

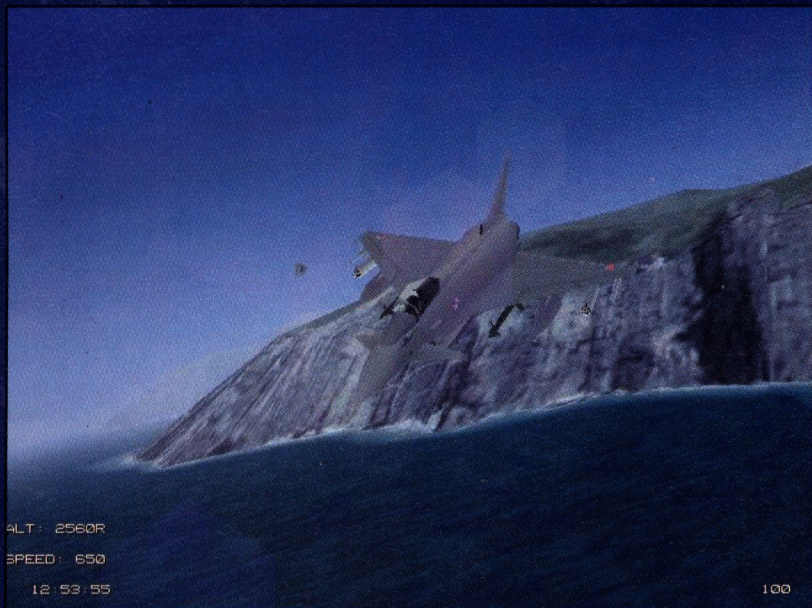
There's not a lot here for the gamer, though, as it comes with a single copy of *Descent 2*. This is a good version, however, and the texture filtering cleans up all those nasty close-up blocks.



Pros: Good 2D performance
Cons: Not really a games-player's card

The Bottom Line

If you've read this round-up and you're still confused as to which card you should buy, there are really only two things to consider. Firstly, which of these cards will make your games look the best? Secondly, how much support are these cards likely to get from the games companies? The answer to the first question is pretty clear: both of the cards that use the Voodoo chipset from 3Dfx and the card that uses the PowerVR chip are head and shoulders above the rest in terms of performance. Obviously you'd expect this from dedicated hardware solutions, but to accommodate them means an extra slot and added expense as well as a decent 2D card for Windows performance. That said, if you're serious about getting the most out of your PC as a games machine, then this is the way ahead. The question of support is a bigger problem. We're writing this as we go to press (we've waited as long as possible for the promised patches) and the only really big game to get the patch treatment so far is *Tomb Raider*. Of course, there are other reasons why you might want one of these cards. For example, Creative's card has a nice version of *Quake* in its list of software titles and you may want it just for that. We must say "Don't do it" – it isn't worth having a card that will always play second fiddle to the 3Dfx's and PowerVRs of this world just for one game. Based on our experience we'd say that buying one of these cards now will lead to disappointment and frustration. Buy a 3Dfx and play *Tomb Raider*. Buy a PowerVR and play *Ultimate Race*. Buy a 3DBlaster and play *Quake*. Get the picture? Matters will be confused further when more cards using the 3Dfx and PowerVR chipsets arrive, which will mean that price will be an even bigger issue than it is now. Do yourself a favour. Wait a couple of months for the situation to settle down. If you *do* buy a 3D card now, we hope this feature will have helped you make a considered decision, but don't blame us if you end up with a nice card in your machine and nothing that supports it!



« provides acceleration for Rendition and 3dfx chipsets. DiD will also have hardware acceleration built into their forthcoming TFX3 F-22 game.

Other accelerated titles include Gremlin's *Euro 96*, for the 3DBlaster, and 3dfx versions of *Actua Soccer*.

Although it's very early days, the strategy of producing free patches for existing games seems to be the one being adopted by most companies. The patches released so far are either for the 3dfx Voodoo or the Rendition Verite, and only time will tell when or if other chipsets will be directly supported as well. While there are only a few Direct3D games out at the moment, there are plenty in the pipeline, which will mean plenty of choice no matter what hardware you decide upon.

Conclusion

As things stand at the moment, if you want the best accelerated games around we'd recommend that you opt for either one of the 3dfx cards (the Orchid and the Diamond), or the VideoLogic Apocalypse. In terms of developer support, 3dfx seem to have the edge, although the Apocalypse's PowerVR is made by NEC, who are bloody huge. However, do bear in mind that all these cards require an additional 2D card, so make sure that you're ready to spend a

fair amount of cash if you want to get your system up to scratch.

If you don't want to commit yourself just yet (or the more likely reason is that you're just plain skint), the choice seems to be between the Creative Labs 3DBlaster and Matrox Mystique; both cards are capable of acceptable 2D performance, but it has to be said that the Matrox is much better in this area. However, although patches for both *Quake* and *Tomb Raider* have been released for the 3DBlaster's Rendition chipset, it's unlikely that many companies will be releasing native Mystique versions.

Sadly, there are plenty of accelerated games looming on the horizon, but very few that we can actually look at now. This is why the general tone of this feature is erring towards being a tad noncommittal; however, we would like to point out that at the outset of writing this feature we were promised versions of games that support these cards from many publishers. Very few actually materialised. You can expect this trend to continue for the next few months at least, and it's worth taking note of this should you buy one of these cards – you may be disappointed with the limited number of games on offer, and a factor such as this is no doubt likely to affect your purchasing decision.

Let's build a dream machine

While most people will

read this feature, and wisely consider the pros and cons of the various 3D options available, there will always be some flash git who wants to try and stuff as many different accelerators into one PC as possible. The only physically possible way of putting three cards into a PC is by using an Apocalypse 3D, either one of the 3dfx cards and a 2D/3D card (we used a Matrox Mystique).

Slightly surprisingly, this set-up worked fine initially, and we managed to run games designed for each card, although the Apocalypse 3D's acceleration had to be turned off before the Mystique worked. When we tried to run a Direct3D program, the system got its pants in a bit of a twist, which is hardly remarkable when you consider that there are three sets of drivers on the system. Let's face it – if you seriously want three accelerator cards in your PC, you deserve a bit of hassle.

The 3D battle continues

IT HAS BECOME VERY CLEAR THAT THE BATTLE FOR supremacy in the 3D arena will, initially at least, be fought between the two 3dfx cards and VideoLogic's PowerVR card. Both 3dfx and VideoLogic are insisting that there will be lots of support for their cards, but we haven't seen any evidence of it yet. However, both chipsets have big titles on the horizon. 3D Realms are developing a 3dfx version of *Prey*, their answer to *Quake*. This is looking very cool indeed, even at this early stage of its development and may go some way to appeasing people who are disappointed that id failed to produce a 3dfx version of *Quake*. French developers Kalisto are working on a PowerVR version of *Nightmare Creatures*, a fantastic looking beat 'em up which takes full advantage of PowerVR's enhanced features. Considering that this game is being produced by the same people who are working on *Dark Earth*, you can expect *Nightmare Creatures* to be graphically stunning. And so the 3D war begins. We'll bring you news on developments as and when we get it.



Nightmare Creatures: potential *Tekken*-beater for Power VR.



Prey: potential *Quake*-killer for 3dfx.

(Top left) Flight sims are notoriously processor hungry, but 3D accelerated versions should keep things running smoothly.

When 3D titles of all flavours start to arrive, though, we'll look at the relevant cards in much more detail. If you really want to buy one of these cards now, there should be enough information here for you to make a decision based on what you think is right for you. If you're wise, though, you'll wait for part two of this feature which we'll be running in a couple of months' time. By then it will hopefully be clear which cards are getting the most support from developers and we'll be in a better position to wholeheartedly recommend one or more of them. Stay tuned. **Z**



CREATIVE

3D Blaster

PCI



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play on PCI systems to a whole new dimension of excitement with imagery so realistic your eyes will be out on stalks.

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CREATIVE

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CyberBoy

3D Glasses

GAMES DEVELOPERS SEEKING to make their products even more realistic these days are using authentic 3D technology first introduced in the early '80s. So-called 3D games such as *Descent*, *Doom* or *Duke Nukem* aren't really 3D because they have to portray an image onto a flat screen. Stereoscopic 3D, first used by scientists for realistic molecular modelling (yawn), is now deemed cheap enough for the average gamesplayer and can be used to trick your brain into thinking that bullets, blood, guts and shrapnel really are flying out of your PC screen.

Stereoscopic 3D works in the following way: in normal vision the left and right eyes relay two different pictures to your brain, which are then translated into a single 3D image using various complicated depth cues. Stereoscopic 3D mimics this by sending

two slightly different pictures to your monitor in quick succession, and the glasses/goggles/headset have LCD shutters that open and close rapidly making sure that each eye sees the appropriate image, thus restoring normal depth perception. Or something.

CyberBoy is a lightweight pair of stereoscopic specs incorporating a pair of headphones into the arms that wrap around your head and block out peripheral vision,

ensuring concentration is centred on the action. But do they work? Surprisingly, yes. The difference CyberBoy makes is quite amazing, and games like *Descent* really come to life, with bits of debris seeming to come off the screen.

Setting up is simple – plug the glasses into the adaptor, the adaptor into the serial port and the headphones into your sound card and off you go – you don't even need an external power supply.

Games that come with CyberBoy include *Fatal Racing*, *Descent 2* and *Depth*

Dwellers, as well as a patch to convert *Descent I*. Other games are already available or promised to be in development from Apogee, Softdisk, Gremlin and LucasArts.

Duncan Swain

Score

89

A pricey toy but worth shelling out for if you haven't got something more life-enhancing to spend £129 on.

Price: £129.99 **Release date:** Out now
Manufacturer: Typhoon Multimedia/Anubis
E-mail: woobo@woobo.com/

dan *The People's Choice*
Personal Computers



Maxi Sound 64

Home Studio PnP

GUILLEMOT INTERNATIONAL AREN'T exactly a household name in the UK – unlike Creative Labs, a company almost as famous as Noel Edmonds. Apparently, in France Guillemot are as well known as Antoine de Caunes, and just a few days spent schmoozing their Maxi Sound 64 card explains why. It's one of the best bargains around, featuring over 425 WaveTable sounds on 4MB ROM coupled with awesome digital audio functions for less than many inferior cards. It's capable of simultaneous playback of four stereo wav files while mixing them with the output from its on-board synth, a WaveBlaster-compatible daughter-board and the kitchen sink you've attached to the line in socket on the back – add SIMM's and you can playback eight rather

than four wav files. For budding musos, it's fantastic – and that's before mucking about with the on-board effects, which include reverb and flange.

For gamers, it's also paradise. The General MIDI sounds are great and SoundBlaster support is seamless. Not only that, but there's an excellent surround sound effects mode that gives games a new spatial quality, man; attach

a spare amp and two extra speakers, and you can have sound coming from behind you as well as from the front... If the price sounds stiff, it's because you will be after buying it. Believe me, I'm already booked into the clinic.

Tim Ponting



Score

92

Fantastic for gamers, musicians and poor people.

Price: £189.99 **Release date:** Out now
Manufacturer: UbiSoft
Tel: 0181 944 9000

dan *The People's Choice*
Personal Computers



Gravis GamePad Pro

THE ORIGINAL Gravis GamePad consistently beat every other gamepad in every round-up we've ever done in *PC Zone*. It was extremely well made, all four buttons were highly responsive and the little screw-in joystick thingy that came with it was a blessing in disguise when used with games like *Sensi* and even the odd beat 'em up. Some people didn't like its shape and size, but compared to the numerous MegaDrive clone pads that either fell apart or gave you blisters after just a few hours' button bashing, it was an absolute godsend.

In fact, the only thing the original GamePad fell down on was that it didn't have enough buttons for certain games, especially beat 'em ups, and as more and more console and PlayStation conversions become available for the PC, it's become increasingly obvious that four buttons are no longer enough – which is where the all new GamePad Pro comes in.

To say that it looks like a PlayStation pad is just a bit of an understatement. Gravis have obviously researched their ergonomics and come to the same conclusions as Sony; if you've played any PSX game, you'll know just how good these pads are. Constructed from a

lightweight blend plastic, it sits snugly in your hands and all ten buttons are easily accessible and responsive, as is the eight-way directional pad. The 'shoulder' buttons are within easy reach and the software on the accompanying CD means that once you've installed the appropriate drivers, all ten buttons will work with DOS-based games that support Gravis GrIP and all Windows 95 DirectInput games. A switch on the bottom of the pad allows you to switch from DOS, GrIP and Two-Player modes for easy two-player input (you'll need two GamePad Pro pads to do this) and, believe it or not, it actually works without too much hassle.

As well as daisy-chaining a second GamePad Pro via the built-in Y-cable for two-player games, you can also connect up to four GamePad Pro pads to a Gravis MultiPort for simultaneous four-player pad action. The accompanying software also allows you to assign any keyboard commands to any button, and as it's self-calibrating, you should only have to set it up once.

In terms of performance, the GamePad Pro retains all the good things about the original and combines the exceptional build quality and responsiveness with a new and extremely comfortable ergonomic design that should appeal to hardcore gamers and console users alike.

It may be a bit more expensive, but you get what you pay for as far as performance and build quality go. What's more, it's easy to set up, compatible with most software and still comes with the same little joystick thingy, so if your thumb gets sore using the direction pad, you know what to do.

Jeremy Wells



Score

92

The second-best object to have in your hand while playing with friends.

Price: £29.99 **Release date:** Out now
Manufacturer: Advanced Gravis Europe
Internet: <http://www.gravis.com>
Tel: +31 (0) 36 536 4443

dan *The People's Choice*
 Personal Computers

MS IntelliMouse

TO MOST PEOPLE MICE ARE JUST something you use to move a cursor around the screen, or a character around a level.

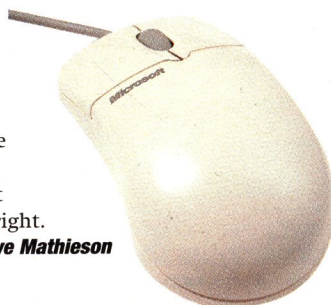
Microsoft, on the other hand, take a very different view of the pointing device and don't certainly take them for granted like we do...

Until their recent foray into the manufacture of joysticks and gamepads mice were the only hardware that Microsoft produced, and they've always enjoyed a reputation for making sturdy little fellas. This new model looks just like their previous versions, except that it has a little grey wheel on top between the right and left buttons. The wheel has two 'modes'. Firstly, it can function as a third button, which can be used for things like double-clicking or to activate the 'Start' menu. More importantly

though, the wheel can be used to scroll through documents in Windows. Since the software needs to be aware of it, and it's dead new, the only major program it works with at the time of writing is Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0, although it will work with all future Microsoft releases.

The wheel is pretty handy when zipping through Web pages, and it'd be ideal for things like scrolling through inventories in games – however, only time will tell if this will actually happen. In the meantime, aside from its extra capabilities over the conventional mouse, the IntelliMouse is a pleasant mouse to use in its own right.

Dave Mathieson



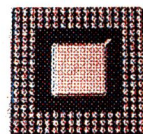
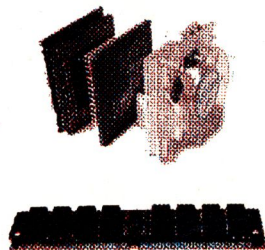
Score

70

A nice mouse with a wheel.

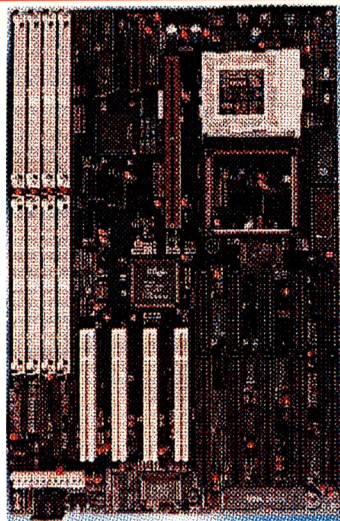
Price: £59.99 **Release date:** Out now
Manufacturer: Microsoft
Tel: 0345 002000

dan *The People's Choice*
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Issue 23 - September 96.

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Non parity memory is 70ns. EDO memory is 60ns. Call for SDRAM.

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Pioneer DRA-12X IDE	£110.00	£129.25
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These motherboards are in all the top performing PC's on the market, all have HX chipsets, 512kb pipeline burst cache, onboard IO, support Intel (to 200mhz), AMD & Cyrix (to P166) CPU's.

TYAN S1562 Award	£152.00	£178.60
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DFI G586 VPS Pro. For Cyrix P200, VLSI chipset, 256k pbc, IO.	£153.00	£179.78

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Mystique - SGRAM. (Retail inc 2 games)		
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4MB	£148.00	£173.90
Diamond. 3D 2240/2440 - EDO.		
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4MB	£94.00	£110.45
Iiyama Monitors.		
MF-8617	£489.00	£574.58
MT-9017	£549.00	£645.08

Controllers

Adaptec AHA. Single SCSI Bus.		
2940U Ultra	£175.00	£205.63
2940U/Wide	£192.21	£225.85
Dual SCSI Bus.		
3940U Ultra	£268.00	£314.90
3940U/Wide	£308.00	£361.90

Buslogic Flashpoint. Single SCSI Bus.		
LT Ultra	£95.00	£111.63
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Dual SCSI Bus.		
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Gravis		
Analog Pro	£20.42	£23.99
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CH		
F16 Fltstk	£34.46	£40.49
Throttle	£55.22	£64.88
Pedals	£37.14	£43.64
V. Pilot Pro	£63.27	£74.34
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F1 Sim	£199.00	£233.83

Sounds

Yamaha XB50G	£77.00	£90.48
Typhoon AW32 PnP. Speakers.	£57.00	£66.98
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Premier XL Voice/Fax 33.6 external. A great performing voice/fax modem at a low, low price. It comes with an earpiece and mic for phone operation, Chayenne fax/voice-mail/faxback software + all required cables. BAPT approved	£94.00	£110.45
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Software

Gemm V8. Ultimate Memory Management. DOS/Win3.x/95 Upgrade version	£43.00	£50.53
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Cleansweep 95. Keep track of unruly Win Installations 95/3.x.	£18.00	£21.15

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DIAL 90



We like to take our mandate

literally here. This is a games magazine, innit? This is the on-line section, innit? And here – steady your bladders, chaps – is a page about an on-line gaming thing. Imagination? Who he? Certainly not **David McCandless**.

DESPITE THE RECREATIONAL DRUG connotations of its title, E-on is a newly launched, brand spanking new Web site. Yes, woo fancy that – a new Web site. In fact, it's the world's first family-orientated pc entertainment channel on the Internet, no less.

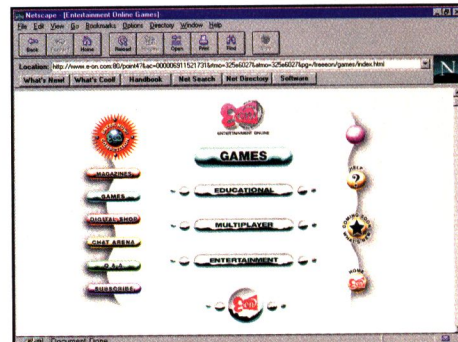
We've all played pin-the-penis-on-the-porn star and other such eclectic adult diversions, but now for the first time under one roof is a 'value mix', a one-pee chewbag full of games, chatting, magazines, home shopping and all that stuff – all geared toward the thoroughly nuclear family.

'iQue?' as you're probably saying if you're reading this in Spain. Well, E-on – short for Entertainment Online, MDMA lovers – is like a big house, a big Internet igloo, packed with interesting diversions for both the unwashed on-line game guru, and the daft

buck-toothed family of four who live next door. You may be thinking: 'So far, so press release.' Indeed, we have skimmed the press fluff, which contains such engaging phrases as: "showcase our products", "additional product visibility", "investor support", and "mass-market appeal and impact".

If you have a modem and an Internet account, the main attractions can be broken down thusly:

1. Range of games to buy, mail order, from people like Sony/Psychosis, Virgin, Gremlin, er US Gold, and er, Gametek.
2. Dedicated Internet multi-player games, custom programmed for "maximum use of the Internet environment" (ie don't expect anything of the *Quake* variety).



Members can get hold of past classics at knock-down prices – games, edutainment and other stuff.

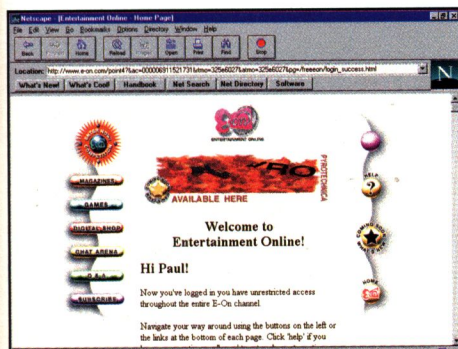


Iron Wolves is just one multi-player Internet game on offer through Entertainment On-line.

3. Edutainment, infotainment and whatever other buzzword is floating around at the time. There's some stuff which ties in with the National Curriculum to help 'kiddies' study



E-on divided into a number of sections. From top to bottom: the multi-player arena, on-line gaming details, the Alan Partridge-inspired 'chat arena', reviews and previews in the on-line magazine, buy posters and stuff in the shop, and the FAQ page.



The man with the free joumo account goes on-line to see what all the fuss is about.



In the GamesRoom no one can hear you scream...

At the epicentre of Entertainment Online is the GamesRoom, a – hey! – chatroom-cum-lobby thing, where you hook up with your fellow frontier gamespersons (translation: the sad and socially lifeless of the world, both real and virtual) to chin and organise matches of skill, daring and cunning.

Each client in the GamesRoom can pick a face for themselves from a grotesque library of Aryan master-race types. Hairstyle and colour (or the lack of it), clothing and complexion can all be modelled to reflect your own or, more likely, to reflect the womanising Han Solo-style scoundrel you are in your dreams.

After some sundry chat and a not inconsiderable effort not to swear (this is a family site, after all), you can usually hook up with one of the ten or so players consistently on-line, and entice them to play you at one of the games on offer.

CHESS

Our first stop was the 'oldest and most respected battlegame in the world'. Surely *Doom*? Or maybe two-player *Tetris*? Nope, chess. Boring old, middle-class kid's chess. But you often forget what a great game chess is and what good exercise it is for your brain. Play chess every day for a month and then see how good you are at *Red Alert*.

The guy we played had obviously been doing exactly that as he quite effortlessly thrashed us first round. But then strangely he found himself being resoundingly pummelled in both the second and third and fourth games. How did we manage to make such a come-back? Why, by running *Cyrus Is Chess* on our Spectrum emulator in the background and playing his moves against the computer. Heh, heh, heh. After eight or so consummate victories, we eventually let the ÜberChessMeister in on this deception. Unfortunately, he was too young and had never heard of the Spectrum (strangely, he did recall the Sinclair C5).

POKER

Quite good fun this, especially with the maximum four players. Simple five-card stud with raising, calling and folding. Satisfying 'clattering chips' and 'fresh card' sound effects are on hand for extra gloss. The whole thing is quite satisfying for a short period of time, but the dealer is too easy to bluff, and the lack of real cash, cigars, and tennis visors shows.

TANK WARRIOR

The first arcade action game on-site is this *BattleZone* variant for up to eight players. It looks and plays okayish, but if it was released in the shops, it would be laughed out of the charts. You get a head-up display, various power-ups, and a 'speed key', but the action is an unthrilling mess – a bit like that 3D maze game which came with the first release of Win95 whose name we can't remember. Like that.

SPEED

Now this one is quite good. It shouldn't be. But it is. Its graphics are deeply average. The sound effects are bland. And the gameplay – on paper – sounds perfectly pedestrian. However, it somehow works.

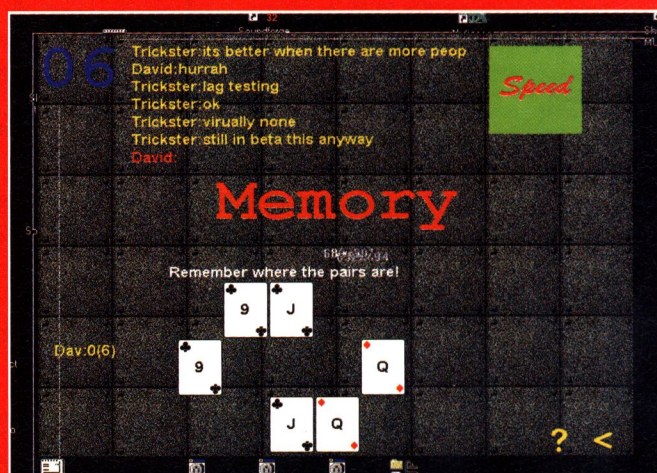
Gist-wise, you and up to seven others are confronted by a sequence of puzzles, both brain, luck and co-ordination-based. A time-limit ticks away in the background. Any time left over after completing a puzzle is converted into points. After four puzzles, the winner is the one with the most points and graduates a level. The puzzles run along the lines of *Simple Simon* (remember the right coloured sequence), *Hi Or Lo* with playing cards, *Blackjack*, *Solitaire*, *Fish* (click as many fish as possible) and so on. It sounds poo, we know, but it actually works.



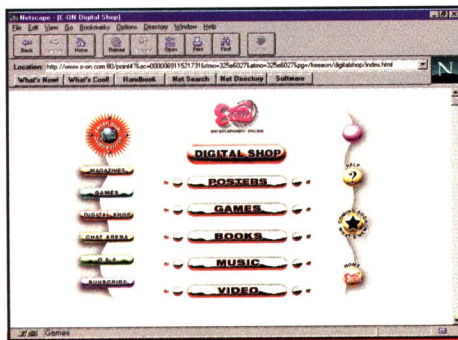
The best way to play Chess on-line is to pick a very young opponent who's never heard of the Spectrum and who wouldn't dream of cheating.



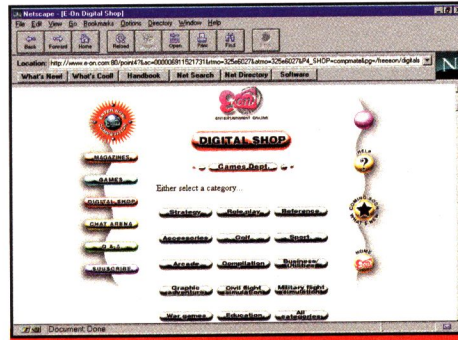
Our Macca's a real ladies' man so he obviously won five-card stud. Sad boy...



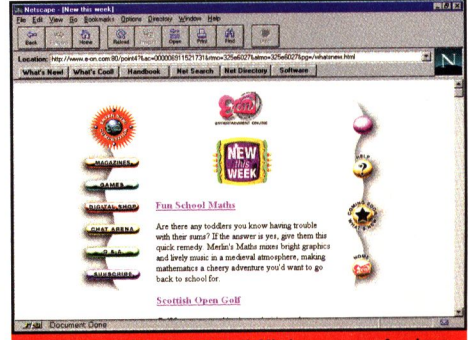
This is a good 'un – but no amount of extra RAM or cache memory will help ya! Boo hoo.



With a credit card and access to the Internet you need never leave your house again! You sad git, oh sorry, technophile.



Pick a genre, then see if there's anything in here that'll tickle your fancy. One-handed Net surfers need not apply.



Urg! It's that 'edutainment' stuff. Mind you, some of us here could do with brushing up on their sums.

in an interactive and massively expensive phone bill sort of way. PC Zone says bring back O-Levels and the cat o' nine tails.

4. An on-line magazine, called Neon, packed with features, news, letters, interviews and competitions. Hardly innovative but interesting nevertheless.

5. A chat forum to swap info and meet fellow members.

6. A big on-line shopping mall for buying things. Not dissimilar to going down to the local shopping centre but without the drunken tramps urinating in your handbag.

Naturally, the only option we're interested in is *numero dos* – the Internet multi-player games. We can buy stuff at shops, we can learn at school or from books, we can read a proper paper magazine (hey, like, now), we can talk to our friends. All this New Age chat and electronic commerce is irrelevant to us, the modern games player.

Da games innit

E-on has quite an extensive list of playable games. Twelve, in fact, with more being added and beta tested every month. Now, don't be expecting *Quake* or *Red Alert*-style shenanigans. These games are small, often crude, and often designed with the cheap thrill of multi-player

games in mind. To this end, the bottom of the evolutionary E-on ladder is cluttered with some 'classic' jouets, that is, *Reversi*, *Blackjack*, and *Checkers* (the rather irritating American variant of *Draughts*). In the middle, the games get a little more graphics-intensive and grown-up. Allow us to take you through some.

Well? Can then

E-on have other games in the pipeline, including *Twilight Lands*, a multi-player on-line RPG which will hope to clip some of the audience from *Meridian 59* and the forthcoming *Ultima On-Line*. Another title, *L5 Assault*, is a co-operative assault on a space station, overhead à la *Alien Breed*, while *Iron Wolves* is a kind of 3D *Battleships* thing.

The site is fast and looks great. The software is nice, well programmed and stable. But something is wrong with "the best game site in the world". The problem here, and in other places on the Internet where on-line gaming is springing up, is the belief in one theory: if it's multi-player, it's worthy.

Not true. The best plural player games are brilliant games designed with multi-player in mind, not with the feature simply superimposed by an over-active marketing department. This means you can't just simply

make a network game and say it's wonderful. It has to be a brilliant game first. By creating a warehouse of on-line games, E-on have proved this. *Chess* works superbly on the site, but the other lower end games – *Blackjack*, *Reversi*, or *Checkers* – are no more engaging than cheap ASCII BBS games.

Similarly, when the games become more graphically sophisticated, such as in *Tank Warrior*, you think 'how can this game have been created in the same century as *Quake*?' *Speed* is good fun, and it's possible that E-on may strike gold with their forthcoming releases. But the gameplay is so hit and miss, you can't help thinking you're paying to test this stuff, rather than paying to explore the glossy, well-planned summit of on-line gaming. **Z**

Access details

Site: <http://www.e-on.com/>

Access: Most areas are free. GamesRoom is subscribers only

Price: Dependent on provider. One month's subscription £5.99 via CompuServe, Pipex and Easynet. £9.99 through other select providers

Requirements: 32-bit dialler, Win 95, Win-G and DirectX (for some games)

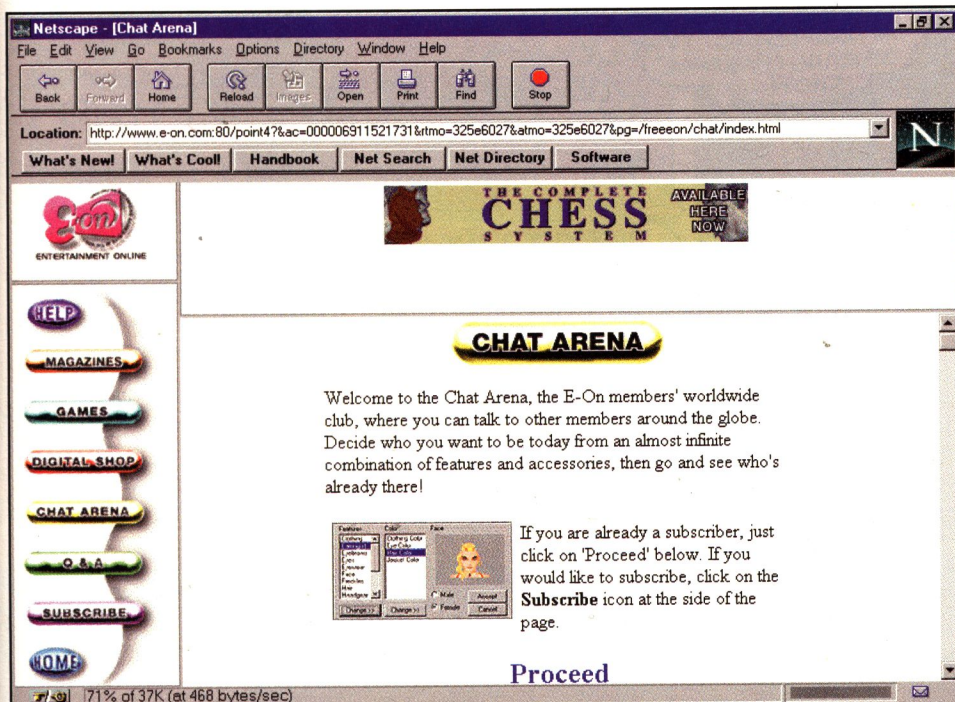
Score

72

Shows promise but games are somewhat primitive. *Chess* is cool, though.

Price: £5.99/£9.99 **Release date:** Out now
Publisher: Entertainment Online
Tel: 0990 133007

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Ooh, look – another chance for fat/ugly/psycho people to find a boy/girlfriend without meeting them and getting involved in sexual harassment cases. No, not really – E-On's chat pages are for younger gameplayers to talk and swap info with each other.



the cybertwats

by charlie brooker

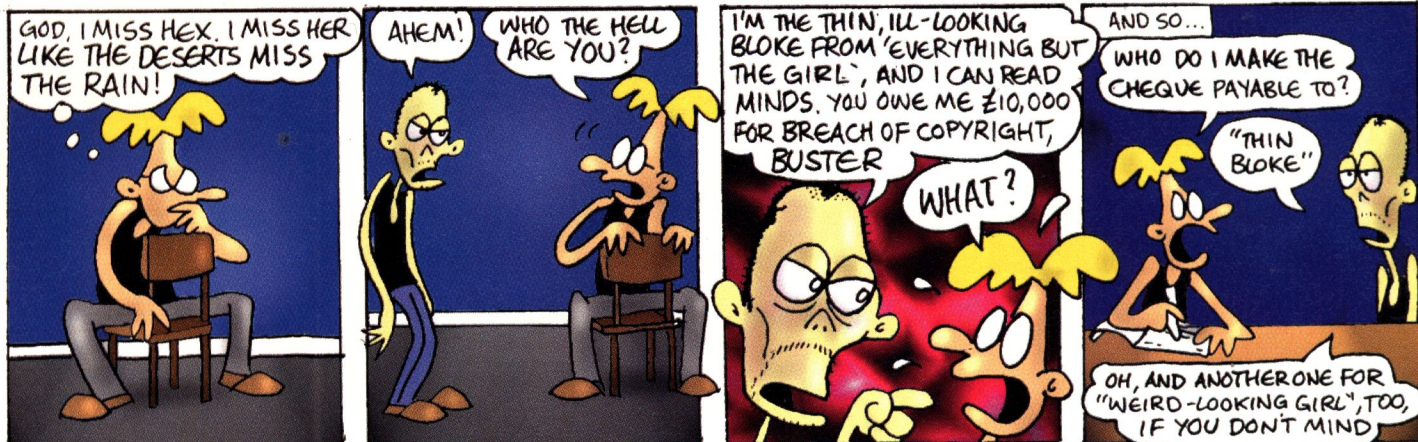


"HOLIDAY IN VIRTUALAND"

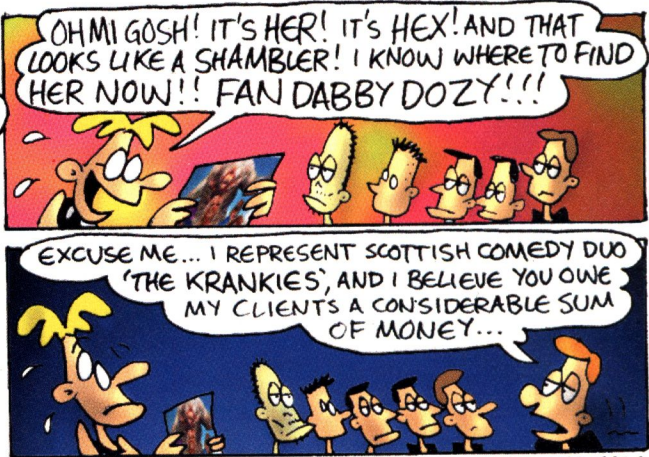
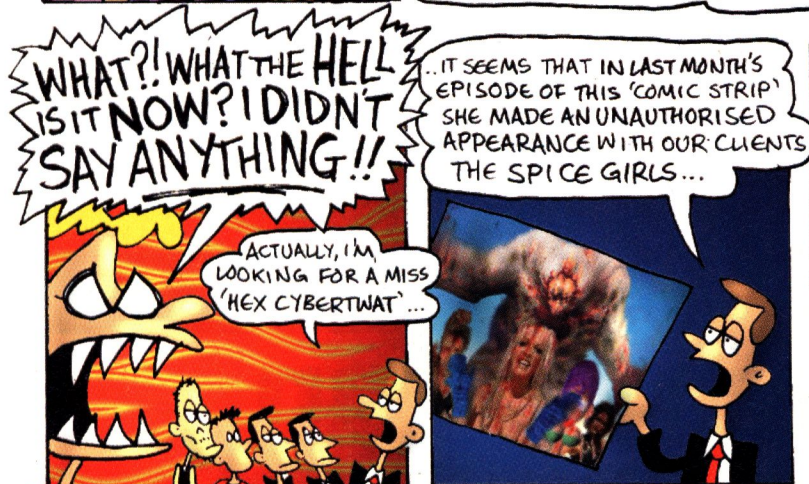
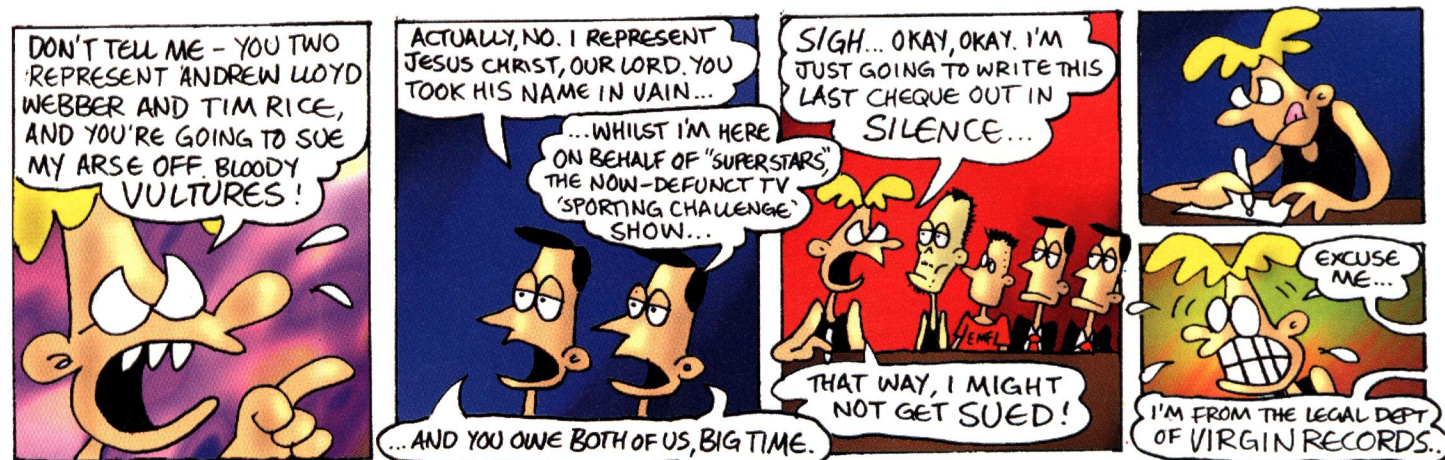
any similarity between the plot of this serial and the motion picture 'TRON' is pretty inevitable, really

THE STORY SO FAR:

Hex Cybertwat is stuck inside a weird kind of virtual world. Her boyfriend, Joe, is not. And he desperately wants her back....

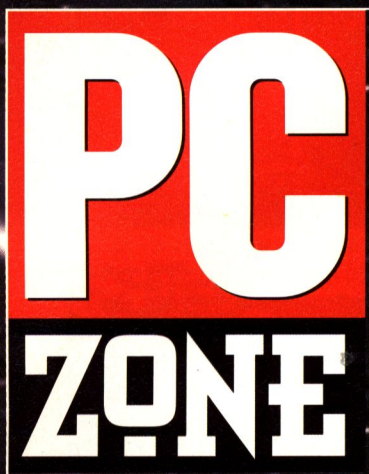


CHARLIE BROOKER VS THE CLOCK



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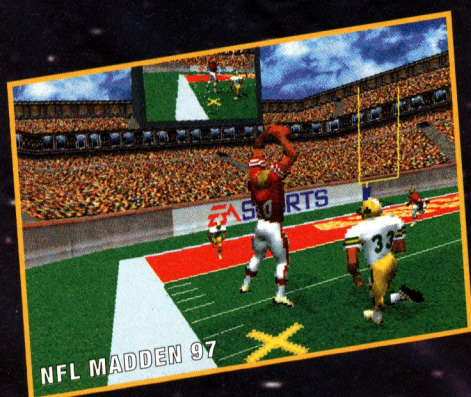
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2 ATF	92	Classic	£44.99	12 NFL Madden 97	87	Recommended	£44.99
3 Civilisation 2	90	Classic	£44.99	13 PGA Gold 96	94	Classic	£44.99
4 F22 Lightning	90	Classic	£44.99	14 Privateer – The Darkening	94	Classic	£44.99
5 FIFA 97	86	Recommended	£39.99	15 Space Hulk VOTBA	90	Classic	£44.99
6 Formula 1 Grand Prix 2	95	Classic	£44.99	16 Syndicate Wars	95	Classic	£44.99
7 Gene Wars	91	Classic	£44.99	17 Team F1	88	Recommended	£39.99
8 Grand Prix Manager 2	80	Recommended	£44.99	18 Top Gun	92	Classic	£44.99
9 Masters Of Orion 2	92	Classic	£44.99	19 US Navy Fighters 97	NR*	–	£44.99
10 NBA Live 97	92	Classic	£44.99	20 Wing Commander 4	85	Recommended	£49.99

*Not yet reviewed



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A screenshot from the FIFA 97 video game showing a soccer match in progress. The scene is viewed from a high angle, showing the pitch, players in red and white kits, and the stadium stands filled with spectators. Advertisements for 'EA SPORTS' and 'FIFA' are visible on the stadium walls. The text 'FIFA 97' is overlaid in the bottom left corner.



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TROUBLESHOOTER

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Syndicate Wars

Part One

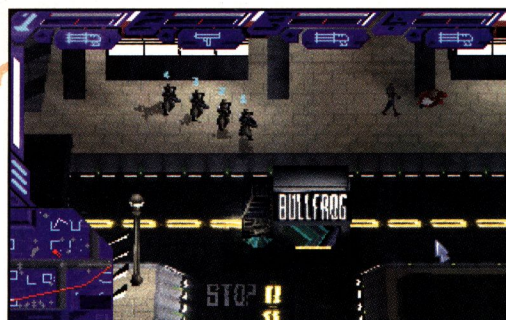
Wanted:- Butch guys who like dressing up in big scary coats, shooting people and blowing things up. Sounds like an invitation too good to resist, doesn't it? This month the Taskmasters set out to save the world from the forces of anarchy, and carve their names with bullets on the grim face of a futuristic, cyberpunk world.

Getting toolled up

To the uninitiated, an Uzi is a terrific weapon. It makes a lot of noise and looks impressive. In fact, this weapon is as much use as a one-legged agent at a bum-kicking convention! Wherever you go you'll find bad guys packing these weapons so they are easily picked up – providing you aren't already carrying one. The best thing to do with an Uzi is to sell it before you go out on a mission and use the cash to buy something better. Provided you are not already carrying one, you will be able to pick up at least four replacements from dead punks, and sell them at the end of the mission to make yet more cash.

Shields

Wonderful things are shields, unless, of course, it's an enemy agent who's wearing one, then they are bastards. Of course, as with all hi-tech items, they have 'features' which can be exploited by the cunning operative. Once you fire a single shot at a shield it becomes activated and stays that way until its power drains. It's no good blasting endlessly at someone wearing a shield – you're only wasting your firepower. Instead, fire once, then wait a few



(Above left) There's something about a cheery bonfire on a cold winter's night that attracts people. Stick around and perhaps those vicars will start a sing song and take up a collection.

(Above right) Spraying a lamppost with bullets is one way to get a party going with a bang. And if you are lucky enough to find a punk standing under one, you're guaranteed to get his undivided attention.

(Right) Knockout gas is just the stuff to provide 20 seconds of peace and quiet in a troubled world. Stand too close, though, and you'll lose your worries, your shield and your life.



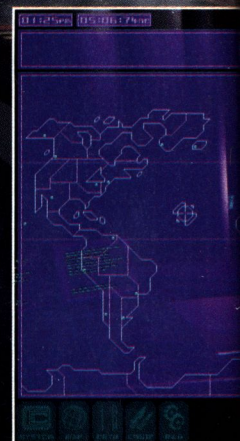
moments until his ever-ready isn't quite so ready, then fire again. Better still, hit him first with something that creates a shockwave as that will immediately drain his shield, then take him out. Remember that lampposts, vehicles and grey bins when shot at can be blown up to create shockwaves.

Your shield is regenerating even as it's being depleted, and the time it takes to drain depends on the state of your

brain. If you've had a brain modification then your shield will last longer. Normally your shield will survive for 10 seconds, but each additional brain modification increases this time by another five seconds.

Keeping healthy

Better even than eating an apple a day, or flossing till your gums are sliced



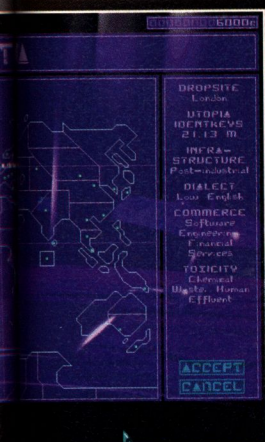
through, you can stay healthy by investing in body modifications. While a normal agent will eventually recover from any damage, those who have had body modifications fitted recover a lot faster. Normal recovery is half a point per second, whereas each increase in body modification improves things by a further half a point per second.

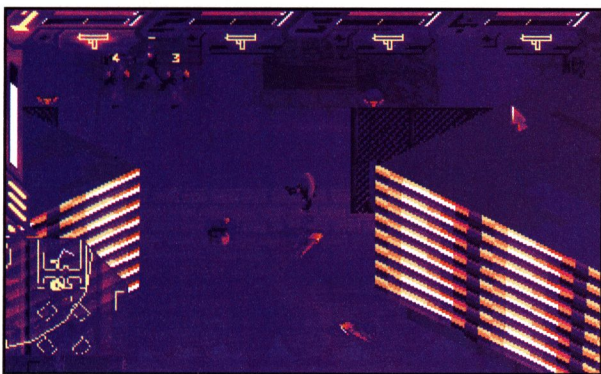
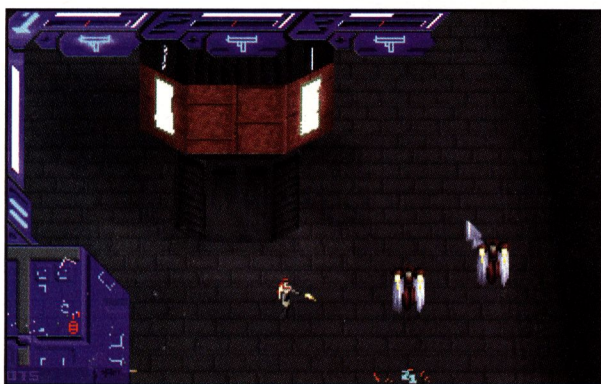
High explosives

Nasty things, explosives, they go off when you least expect it, so listen out for the warning siren and make damn sure you're running in the opposite direction. With practice you'll learn to judge the distance and direction of a potential explosion from the siren's noise (*ah, you mean that Simon & Garfunkel song, 'The Sound of Sirens' - Ed.*).

You should also be aware that shooting a corpse who is holding some high explosives comes under the general heading of 'Not a Good Idea!'.
Bank withdrawals
 No matter how you cut it, you're going to »

(Right) Butch guys who like dressing up in big scary coats? Yes, it's the Gilbert and George of *Syndicate Wars*. Bona tat!





need all the cash you can get in this game. And where is the best place to find cash? In a bank, of course. In lieu of a withdrawal book, I suggest you use high explosives. It's not so polite, but it's effective and you don't have to go through that smiling and 'Have a nice day' crap. Remember that you are the power around here, so don't hesitate to attack any bank you find and adjust their cash flow in a negative direction. You can often find out where money is to be had by investing a few shekels in the Net Scan information facility.

(Above) Turning on the Thermal Imaging option looks impressive and it just may help you locate any villains hiding in the shadows, but the energy drain you'll suffer doesn't really make it a worthwhile option.

How to win friends and influence people

Picking up girls isn't easy when you're dressed like something out of a nightmare and packing a sub-machine gun; girls tend to prefer more of a '90s guy. What every agent needs is a handy Persuadertron, for then simple civilians, both male and female, will find you irresistible – providing you get within spitting distance of them. Very soon you can find yourself looking like the Pied Piper leading wide-eyed innocents around by the nose. You'll also find that as your following grows, so does your pulling power. Soon hard-nosed cops, who would never have dreamed of falling for a butch agent, will turn dreamy-eyed when they see you and become your bosom buddy. You will need a fan club of at least six civilians before a cop will get the urge for your body, and at least 20 before a zealot would find you even mildly sexy.

To activate the Persuadertron, you must get up close and this can be a bit difficult when the object of your affection is pumping lead into you. Try hitting your super shield option then making a run for him, and just hope he gets smitten before you get trashed. You'll also find that your hypnotic power is influenced by the state of your brain power. For each increase in your brain state, your influence will extend by 15 yards. (Note: Those aren't real yards – in this case ten yards is about the height of one of your agents. These are 'BIG' guys!)

With an army of civilians and cops at your side, things can be made tough for bad guys and allow you to cut yourself a bit of slack when the action starts.

Getting rid of friends

There are times when we all want to be alone and even your best friends can become a nuisance. Should you find that you have accidentally 'persuaded' someone you really hate, then it can be very embarrassing and difficult to say goodbye. One thing's for sure, you can't shoot them, for your weaponry won't target someone who's on your team. You can, of course, always go and insult an officer of the law and he'll start spraying both you and your unwanted buddy, but that's not as much fun as the following solution.

The ideal way to get rid of someone who has become 'persuaded' is to set fire to a tree and walk the terminal bore up to the fire. Position things correctly and you'll be able to walk past the flames and leave the nerd behind toasting his buns.

Aiming off-target

Chucking explosives and 'snore' grenades is great fun, but the targets tend to spoil things by running away when they see them coming. The best idea is to aim slightly off-target and chuck the little beauties behind them instead of directly at them. Being bad guys, they're not as smart as you and they tend to stay around laughing at you, shouting, "You missed!" It's just about then when things go bang and their butts get fried.

Research for beginners

Researching new technology is a must, but it does take valuable time. If you're a good little agent you'll patiently wait, ticking off the days until Christmas comes and Santa arrives with your new

super mega-blaster. If, however, you were never very good at waiting for Christmas, here are a couple of tricks to get your toy factory working overtime.

The time taken to develop a new gizmo is dependent on a number of factors – mainly money and manpower. As a general rule, the more money and scientists you throw at the problem, the quicker it will be solved. However, there is a breakeven point, past which you are wasting your resources. Work on a maximum of doubling the money and manpower requirement and you won't go far wrong.

You'll also speed things up if you give the boys in the backroom an example of what you want them to come up with. If you manage to pick up a new gizmo from the field and hand it over, you'll find that your scientists will arrive at a solution just that bit quicker. Each item submitted reduces the research time by 8/9ths. In other words, a weapon that would have taken ten days to research will take only nine if you hand over one that you've found.

If you decide to suspend the research that you've begun on a particular project, it is possible to return to it at a later date and pick things up where you left off. The only downside is that you won't get any credit for unspent money from a suspended project, as this has been committed for good.

Time travelling

Here we have the ultimate cheat for this game – Time Travel! It's a well-known fact that time flies when you're enjoying yourself, but drags like a snail when you're waiting for things to begin. So it is with *Syndicate Wars*. When you go off on a mission, the game measures time using its own rules and, consequently, when you return a hero, you may well receive the mission report stating that you took days to finish things – even although it seemed only like minutes to you. On the other hand, while you're farting around at headquarters getting prepared to go out on another spree, or checking up on how work is progressing in the R&D labs, you'll find that time moves at the same boring pace as the normal world. That's

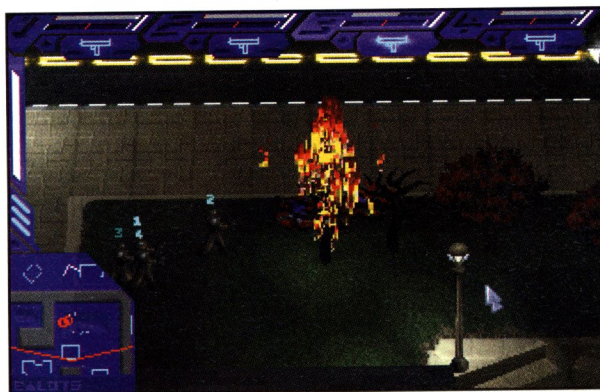


because during this period the game actually uses your PC's clock to determine time. Now, suppose you wanted to knock a few days off the development time of a super mega-blaster? Only a real cad would be so sneaky as to save the game, set the PC's clock to 11:55PM, then reload. Anyone doing such a thing would gain a day's research time as the system clock passed through midnight. To do this twice would be a dreadful act of cheating, so do be careful that you don't do it accidentally. At least be careful that no one catches you!

Getting a little extra charge

Some of the weapons, such as the Pulse Laser, Electron Mace, Plasma Lance and Graviton Gun, can be supercharged to inflict six times the normal damage on targets. Simply hold down the trigger control for a few seconds before letting fly.

(Below) Bad guys, who think it's a smart move to snipe at your troops from the safety of a bush, don't know much about what happens to foliage when red-hot steel starts flying. Sort of 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the burning bush' kind of revelation.



Vehicles

Normally anti-grav cars can only carry four agents and their weaponry with comfort, but if you've used a Persuadertron to collect your own personal army you'll be amazed at how roomy these vehicles can be. Packing your friends into a mini can become quite a moving experience in this game, as there always appears to be room for one more inside.

Vehicles have their own shields which is all very nice, but you must remember that when the car blows, everyone inside goes with it. For this reason it isn't a smart move to get inside a vehicle whose shield is less than 50% intact.

Roll out the barrels

The barrels which are to be found in many scenarios are not simply for decoration, they can be crammed full of goodies, so make sure you investigate them whenever you can. Here's a small list of what you're likely to find inside:

Yellow – High explosives
Blue – Psycho gas
Grey – Knockout gas
Green – Small explosive

Kamikazes 'R' Us

Once you've had an agent's body modified, you'll find that he can then self-destruct by using the <ALT/D> keys. Exploding your own agents may seem rather extreme, but there are times when it can be an effective show-stopper.

By right-clicking on your 'volunteer's' shield indicator you'll switch on the supershield function which pumps it up to maximum. You now have a heavily protected living bomb which can run into a crowd of bad guys and take them all out with a quick key press. Remember, using your buddy to take out the enemy is one way of never having to say you're sorry.

Okay, that gives you all the general information you need to kick some serious butt, but next month we'll be back with some specific tips for those missions which tend to cause the most grief. **Z**





Tomb Raider

This month we bring you the final instalment of what must be considered the best game of its type – ever. The Taskmasters had to be forcibly dragged out of the tombs, kicking and screaming, to write this walkthrough because they were enjoying it so much. If you haven't bought *Tomb Raider* yet – why not? Trust us, they don't come any better than this.

Part 2

Level 7B – Tomb of Tihocan

Swim down the tunnel and find a wall switch which will lower the water level. Leave the water and operate the wall switch to open the door. In the next room climb to the top and operate the switch to flood the room. Exit through the passageway beneath you, dive under the water and find another lever to reverse the strong water current. Use the current to take you to the end of the tunnel and operate the switch. Climb to the top of the room

with the swinging scythe, and jump out the left-hand exit.

Use the switch to raise the water, then collect the gold key in the ape room. Use the gold key to cross the water and collect two rusty keys. In the final watery area you must leave the water and enter a small corridor to operate a wall switch. Swim to the Temple, then dive into the black pool nearby to find the passageway that leads to the switch which opens the Temple door. Enter the Temple, kill Pierre, collect the key which he drops, and use it to open the final door.

(Right) They grow their monsters on the large side in this game, and as he has the only key which opens the door out of this room, it looks as though you are going to have to deal with it or forget it.





Level 8A – City of Khamoon

Jump down into the first room and rearrange the blocks so that there's one across the trench which you can use to exit the room. Climb up onto the Sphinx and go to the back of its head to find the emerald key. Use the key inside the Sphinx to get to a large room with a pool and a statue of a cat. Enter the pool and solve the puzzles in the rooms beyond to lower the floor around the cat statue above. In the area beneath the cat find the next emerald key on top of a block. Complete the puzzle to lower the sand in the room above, then use the key to exit the level.

Level 8B – Obelisk of Khamoon

Enter the room with the moving blocks and move them to find the pool. Find the sapphire key on one of the underwater ledges and use it at the level entrance to open two doors. Enter the door in the block room and use the wall switch beyond to lower the first bridge. You must now lower all four bridges to collect the four artefacts. Jump into the room below to find the passage to the second bridge.

Note: You can jump onto the top of the central pillar and across to the white gong. This section requires much

leaping across rooms to find the route to the other bridges – it's confusing, but it can be done. Finally, enter the underwater tunnel. Climb out and find the Sphinx Room nearby. Use the four artefacts to open the final door.

Level 8C – Sanctuary of the Scion

In the main area containing the Sphinx you must find the two wall switches high on the cliffs which open two doors. The first door is on the ground level and contains a slide into a pool. Move backwards onto the slide and grab the edge as you fall (CTRL). Edge sideways onto the platform. At the next slide, enter the pool and get the gold key. Go down the slide again, and jump to the bridge above. Use the key to get into the Ankh Key Room.

Enter the second door, high up the cliff, get the second Ankh key then leave the door and go right, to land on the back of the Sphinx. Use the two keys on the Sphinx's head, then enter the door between its paws. Go into the water and find the wall lever on the right-hand statue to lower the water. Find the wall switch on the right-hand statue then enter the underwater tunnel. Find the scarab and use it to open the gate. Kill Larson, grab the Scion and leave.

Note: It's possible to find an Uzi which is hidden in a secret location of this level. From the Ankh symbol at the top of the Sphinx's head, turn left. Slowly walk forward and right across the side of the head until you can't walk any further. Look below you and find a gun clip that appears to float in mid-air. Jump to the invisible platform and grab the Uzi!

Level 9A – Natlas Mines

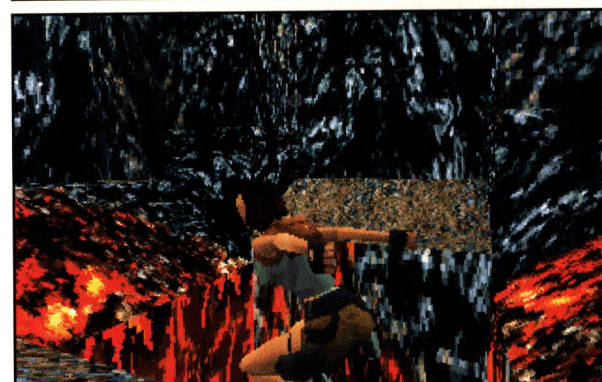
Swim under the waterfall and use the switch. Re-enter the water and exit to the left of the boat. Enter the tunnel to the right of the crates. Find the cabin with a dodgy roof which you can fall through. There are three fuses to be collected in the mines which you can use in a large glass-fronted building to lower the cabin on the cable. From the roof of this cabin you can jump into another tunnel. Find the cowboy in the drilling room and kill him.

In the room with the TNT crates find one which can be pulled into the next room and used as a step up to a side tunnel. Pull a switch to blow up the TNT crates. Kill the guy on the skateboard as he's got an Uzi you can take.

There is a hole in the ground with water in it which leads to a secret area. Dive in and follow the tunnel to a gate which will take you to a room with medi packs and Uzi ammo.

(Below) There are four bridges which need to be lowered to gain all four artefacts required to finish this level. However, you can jump onto the central pillar from above and gain some secret goodies by jumping again to the side ledge behind the white stone carving.

(Bottom) Jumping around in the mines is liable to give you seriously hot feet if you misjudge your step among the lava flows. Look on the bright side – there are a few fiery boulders waiting around the corner to put an end to all your worries.





« You will come to a series of rooms with sliding blocks and switches. Push the first block forward twice. Turn right and climb into the next room. Push the next block forward twice, then drop into the next room. Pull the block backwards, then go back through the upper room.

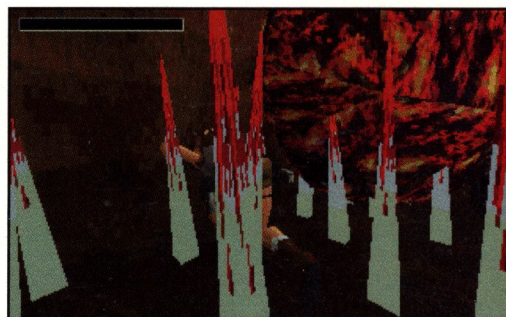
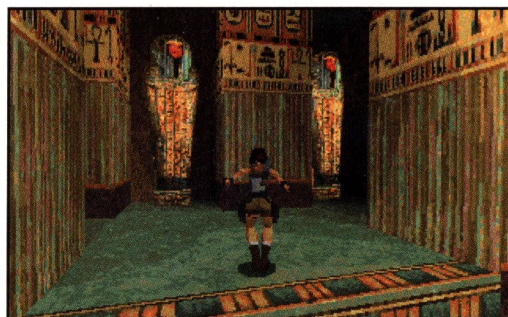
Drop into the lower room. Push the block forward and turn left. Pull the revealed switch, and keeping it on your right go forward, left and up. Enter the tunnel to the left and push the block at the bottom of the stairs. Turn left, head for the door, then use the switch on the left. Move quickly back to the previous switch and find the new route through to a pyramid. Climb the pyramid to find a switch in the side alcove then return to the block maze and find the pyramid key.

Level 9B – Atlantis

Find the switches to open the middle door, and advance upstairs. Progress to the pyramid and make your way across it until you reach the closed red door. Jump across the water and up to an alcove with a switch. Dive into the pool and use the lever below. Here you must beat the clock to get back to the now open red door. Once inside, pull the far lever to open another door. Return to the switch in the high alcove, then race back to this room to find new steps leading to the exit door in the far wall. Eventually you'll come to slide down into a room in which there are two demons and a strange thin creature – don't kill the creature as he is your mirror image. The room is also a mirror image of itself and to leave here you must destroy the creature by making it follow your movements until you drop it into a pit.

Warning: You can't save your game at any point during the time you are getting the creature to follow your movements, or he will stop and you'll have to restart the whole sequence. If the alien does stop, or die, return to the entrance slope and re-enter the room to start again.

Begin the sequence by going right from the centre of the room, up the slope, climbing the column, jumping to the pillar, then jumping to the ledge with the switch. Check that the alien is



(Top right) There's nothing more sickening than the noise of sharpened spikes piercing soft flesh, so look before you leap.

(Right) The later levels have some seriously awe-inspiring locations for you to explore, and the Great Sphinx in the Sanctuary of the Scion is one of the best.

(Below left) Remember: you can survive falls from high ledges if you first maximise your health points. That's one way of reaching places that the game designers didn't want you to get to so easily.

now on the similar sandy ledge. Operate the switch to open the pit. Now, against the clock, you have to jump to the nearby sandy ledge, pillar and opposite ledge to get the alien onto the ledge with the open pit. Move into the middle of the ledge and the alien will fall into the pit. Not a lot of fun, is it? Enter the opened door next to the pit and kill the bad guys who are waiting for you. A bridge can now be raised across the pit by operating the two switches in the furthest corners of the room. This is a timed event, so get your running shoes on.

In the final room with the spinning machine, don't jump down into the furthest room as it's a dead end. Walk up the slope next to the rotating object and attempt to grab the Scion which sits in mid-air to end the level.

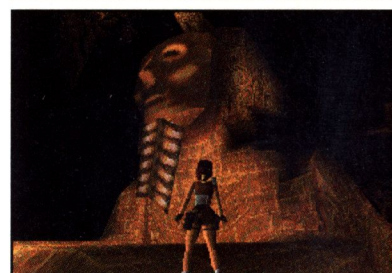
and grab the ledge before you fall. Drop to the floor below.

Shoot the Scion until it blows up. Drop down on the right side of the bridge and into a hole. You must now solve some puzzles which involve swinging blades and heavy boulders until you reach a room with a swinging blade and a small area of water. Jump onto the collapsing tile and run and jump across. Jump and dive into the pool. Use your Uzi to kill the final End of Game Boss. Lots of pillar jumping will take you to the final slope which you slide down to finish the game. **Z**



Level 9C – The Great Pyramid

Kill the ghastly monster in order to open the door. Push the block forward three times. Go past the slicer then turn right. Push the block forward, then go back to the intersection and go down. Pull the block, then go back up. Turn left and down, then push the block once. Return to the red door and stand on the block to operate the switch. Enter this new area and avoid the boulders. With health at maximum, run over the dodgy tile



THE Boggit's Mailbag



(Right) You could hardly call *Monkey Island's* Le Chuck a big head...

Gawd, help us. The Boggit's still here, kicking butts and insulting the punters. Don't blame us – we stopped paying him six months ago, but he just won't go away.

Write to PC Zone

If you have a query concerning a role-playing game or adventure, or you have a hot tip or a cheat to share, then write to:

The Boggit
29 Blackthorn Drive
Larkfield, Aylesford
KENT ME20 6NR



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Broken Sword

Yep, I'm stuck. Completely stumped in fact, and if *Broken Sword* wasn't such a brilliant game I'd have given up weeks ago and thrown it in the bin. I've flown from Paris to Ireland, and I have with me a beer mat, red nose, photo, torch, wire snare, gem, ID card, drain key, match-cover, electric buzzer and a tissue. I've used the drain key to climb over the castle wall, only to find myself faced with a billy goat that I can't get past. Can you help?

Brian Gidlow, Suffolk

Firstly, take no crap from the billy goat, especially if he tells you that he has a bigger and fatter brother who will be along in a minute! You must approach the goat by right-clicking on the ladder. When the swine butts you and knocks you down, simply click on the plough to trap the hairy beast. Now you can go back to the ladder and get into the excavation.

Gobliins II

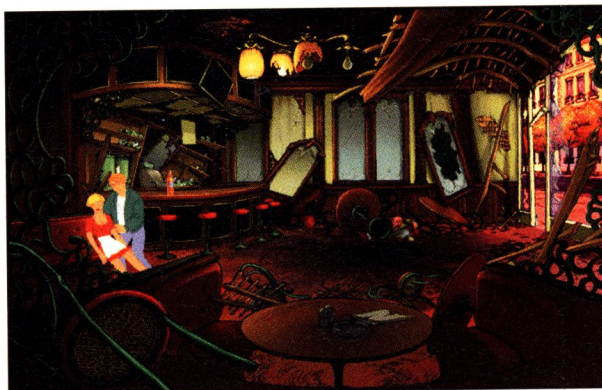
Please help – we're stuck! We're on the section with the guards, the well and the forge. We've worked out how to make Schwarzy jump and hoist the well a little but we can't get into it. We've got the imprint of the lock and given it to the blacksmith. We think we need to get the knife from Gromelon and open the well. We know how to work the bellows, but right now that doesn't seem to help at all.

Emma and John Franklin, Braintree

The best thing about this game is the stupid noises the little goblins make. Not a lot makes me laugh (And don't we know it! - Ed.) but I do like to hear them squeal.

Get the mayonnaise and put it to the right of Gromelon. Get Fingus to jump into the mayonnaise from the shelf. Winkle can now grab the sword. Use Winkle on Rustick, to allow Fingus to grab the chewing gum from Stalopicus's mouth. Use the chewing gum to make the imprint. Give the imprint and the sword to the blacksmith. Use the stool with Winkle on Oto. When the lance gets moved about, hang Fingus on it and he will be thrown to the left, where he can jump on the bellows. The blacksmith will now make the key that you need. Now use the mayonnaise on Focus with Winkle. While the meat is lowered Fingus can get a piece if he uses the stool. Make sure you take the anvil before you leave.

(Below) *Broken Sword*: Well, just 'cos you're a nanny, doesn't mean you can handle that mad billy goat...



Monkey Island II

I know it's a bit old hat, but please help me out with *Monkey II* 'cause I've got nowhere else to turn. I'm attempting to get the four map pieces, but have only succeeded in finding three of them. I have one from the dead guy, one from the mansion and the other from the antique dealer. How on earth do I get the last one?

Robert Shaw, Staines

You say that you got one piece from the dead guy, but I'm not sure what you mean exactly. You get one piece from Rap Scallion, who was dead, but you bring his ashes back to life using the ash to life spell, and you get the other from a skeleton – who I promise you is as dead as you can get! Assuming that it's this last one that you need, this is what you do:

Go to Phatt Island and on to the waterfall. Climb to the top and use the monkey with the pump. Go back to the waterfall and go into the gaping hole. Go to the cottage via the tunnel and enter it. Agree to the drinking contest, and when the man leaves you alone with your drink, use your drink on the tree. Use the 'near grog' with your empty mug. After the contest open shutters, put mirror in the frame and go outside. Use the telescope with the statue. Go into the cottage and push the brick over the trapdoor. Enter the cellar and take the map.

Sam and Max

I need to get the mood ring out of the ball of twine but just don't know how to. Can you also tell me what I should do at Frog Rock, after all the trouble I had to find it?

Victor Borg Barthet, Malta

You need to visit the ball of twine three times. On the first visit the curator will tell you about the World of Fish, and then go to the top of the ball where you'll see a strand of twine. Get the swami to bend some cutlery for you. Visit the Fish World and use the cutlery to release the fish, then climb inside and use the cutlery again. You will now be taken back to the ball of twine – this time you can get to an unravelled piece, which you must use Max on. You are now ready to head off to the Gator Golf which will give you a snow globe and a tuft of hair. The next stop is a visit to the Mystery Vortex where you meet Shuv-Oohl, who tells you that he needs his mood ring. Return to the ball of twine museum and simply use the golfball retriever on the ball to get the ring you seek. Shuv-Oohl now gives you magic powder in return, and this is what's used at Frog Rock, along with three samples of fur. Z

BUYERS' GUIDE

Subdivided by genre

Welcome to the PC Zone Buyers' Guide. Over the next few pages you'll find every game we've reviewed over the last 12 months, as well as those we feel should go down in gaming history as Classics.

ACTION

ABSOLUTE ZERO 70

Domark, £39.99

Sub-standard Wing Commander clone which needs loads of HD space.

R36 PD36

ALIEN TRILOGY 79

Acclaim, £39.95

Popular psx first-person shooter that, for all its light-sourcing, is somewhat dated, repetitive and too easy compared to Quake.

R46 PD46

ARCHIMEDEAN DYNASTY 92

Blue Byte, £44.99

An underwater mercenary combat game, sort of like Wing Commander IV with submarines (and without hugely expensive FMV sequences). Interesting mission structures, a good plot, and proper underwater currents to deal with, all in gorgeous true 3D. Think Stingray (but without 'Aqua' Marina and Peter Lorre).

R46 PD46

ASSAULT RIGS 78

Psygnosis, £34.99

Playable but rather formulaic psx-converted platform game in a tank. Network options.

R69



BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 83

FunSoft, £34.99

Pretty good PlayStation conversion of a good-looking beat 'em up which runs well without a 3D accelerator card. The gameplay itself is a bit too fireball-orientated, but if you must have it...

R40 PD37

BLAMI MACHINEHEAD 77

Eidos, £39.99

Another psx-converted, first-person shooty thing, this time with you strapped to a hovering nuclear warhead. Playable enough.

R46

BUBBLE BOBBLE 80

Acclaim/Taito, £29.95

The retro mania continues apace with this

re-release of Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands. Arcade perfect, with cute music and lots of cakes...

R45

CANNON FODDER 90

Virgin Interactive, £24.99

Great fun, this one. Action-orientated forerunner to the likes of Command & Conquer and Z.

R14 PD13, 28 T18, 37

CAPTAIN QUASAR 73

The 3DO Company, £39.95

Incredibly repetitive, isometric viewed shoot 'em up that was popular on the 3DO.

R45

CHAOS ENGINE 80

Renegade, £32.99

Multi-directional scrolling, top-down, manic shoot 'em up action.

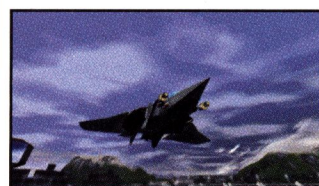
R20 T21

CRUSADER 91

Origin/Electronic Arts, £49.99

Action, adventure, problem-solving, strategy and people getting their heads blown off all rolled into one in this isometric-viewed, futuristic shoot 'em up.

R33 T38, 39 T46, 47



CYBERIA 2 80

Interplay, £44.95

If you liked the first game, you'll like this. Your quest (just for a change) is to save the world via the usual mix of arcade shooty bits and crap 'adventure' bits.

R41

DARK FORCES 95

LucasArts/Virgin, £54.99

Wonderfully atmospheric Doom-isation of Star Wars that many people preferred to Doom itself. Great graphics, tricky puzzles, true 3D levels and stirring tunes - and you get to shoot the heads off of Imperial Stormtroopers.

R24 PD25, 29 T27

DESCENT 2 90

Interplay, £39.99

Hardened Descenders will find enough to test them, but there's a learning curve for

C = Classic R = Recommended P = Pants

R = reviewed (issue number)
PD = playable demo on cover (Issue number)
RD = rolling demo on cover disk (Issue number)
LE = level editor
T = tips or solution (Issue number)

newcomers too. New weapons, monsters and great sound effects, plus 'Capture the Flag' team games. Great stuff.

R37 PD37 T41

DESERT STRIKE 78

Gremlin, £34.99

Playable but rather rosey conversion of MegaDrive's strategic 'copter shoot 'em up.

R20 T40



DOOM 96

ID Software, £29.99

Surely we don't need to tell you about this one? If you're still after levels for it though, we had 130 on Issue 17's cover disk, 500+ on Issue 21's, and about the same on Issue 25's. And it's free on Issue 28's. See also Ultimate Doom, further on.

R13 PD28, LE15 T12, 19

DUKE NUKEM 3D 93

US Gold, £44.99

A Doom-clone that actually manages to be more inventive and entertaining than the original. Full registered version has some cool new weapons and nastier enemies, a level designer, and the facility to convert Doom-wads into Duke maps. It's funny, too.

R40 PD41 T38, 39 42

EXTREME GAMES 70

Psygnosis, £29.99

psx-converted trendy-sports combat racing game that plods even on a P133.

R37

FADE TO BLACK 94

Electronic Arts, £44.99

The follow-up to Flashback - outstanding graphics, fancy spinny-aroundy polygon bits, and a level of difficulty that's up there with licking your own anus. Has all the elements of the original - and it's in 3D!

R31

FINAL DOOM 62

GT Interactive, £44.95

Last attempt to wring yet more money from any suckers who haven't heard of Duke Nukem 3D or Quake. The levels are quite good, it sports hi-res and Internet play, and it runs under Windows 95.

R42

FIRESTORM: THUNDERHAWK 2 60

Core Design, £39.99

Below-par helicopter shoot 'em up with pop-up mountains.

R36

FLASHBACK 89

US Gold, £9.99

Beautifully animated platform game with the nightmarishly hard foes and treacherous traps that will do to your tads what a Spanish chef does for a bull's. Varied locations including a killing gameshow but the game isn't easy and

the complicated controls only work well with a gamepad.

R6 T7

FX FIGHTERS 93

Philips, £39.99

One of the best 3D beat 'em ups on the PC. Loads of moves, atmospheric graphics and fighters ranging from snappy-limbed insects through pneumatic-breasted women/cat hybrids to giant turd monsters. Cool.

R29 PD30 T31, 32

HERETIC 78

ID/Raven, £39.99

Doom in tights.

R25 PD24 T26



HEXEN 94

ID, £39.99

One stage up from Doom in terms of gameplay, it's essentially a simplified RPG with a less linear approach and an improved game engine that lets you look up and down. Great-looking, extremely involving, with an eight-player deathmatch facility.

R33 (booklet)

THE HIVE 78

Funsoft UK, £39.99

Pre-rendered shoot 'em up. Rebel Assault without the good bits.

R35 PD35

IMPERIAL PURSUIT 80

LucasArts, £19.99

X-Wing add-on: long, involving, 'story-driven' tour of duty.

R7 T3

INFERNO 88

Ocean, £44.99

Slick space combat thingy that branches out into sub-aqua combat thingy and even planet surface hovey combat thingy. Cut-scenes, reasonable graphics, fine explosions, booming sfx and pilot aids galore.

R20 PD25

JUNGLE STRIKE 79

Gremlin, £39.99

Follow-up to Desert Strike, the same but with more trees.

R26 PD25

KLUK 'N' PLAY 88

Europress, £39.99

It's not a game as such, but a game designer for Windows that lets you make the sort of sick, unpleasant action fests that you've always wanted. Neat, intuitive and fun.

R22

KRAZY IVAN 77

Psygnosis, £39.99

Potentially playable first-person viewed robot-based shoot 'em up let down by limited views and a fiddly control system.

R45 PD45

C MAGIC CARPET 96 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Very good mana-based shoot 'em up that's very hard and gets a bit repetitive after a while, but looks and plays fantastic.

R21 PD22 T26, 39



C MAGIC CARPET 2 92 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Improved version of the first game with new monsters and scary night-time bits. Also comes with a good on-line help mode, and it's a little easier than the original.

R32 PD31 T42

R MAGIC CARPET: HIDDEN WORLDS 80 Bullfrog, £19.99

Add-on levels for Magic Carpet, but beware: it's utterly, stupidly, nut-crushingly hard.

R27

R MECHWARRIOR 2 88 Activision, £49.99

Rarely has stomping around the countryside in a 70-foot armour-plated monster robot, blowing the shit out of anything you take a dislike to and generally running amok been so rewarding, so spiritual, so... healing.

R32 PD32 T34, 36, 41

R MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES 88 Activision, £44.99

MechWarrior gets a graphical tweak in the form of a bit of texture mapping and proper terrain on some, but not all, levels. And it gets a gameplay tweak by having everything you do (or don't do) be motivated by financial gain rather than all that tedious clan nonsense. Other than that, it's business as usual.

R15 PD17

C METALTECH: EARTHSIEGE 2 90 Sierra, £44.99

Equally hard campaign mode, but here the graphics are excellent, the terrain varied and the sound effects stepped up. Which makes it just about the best giant robot game around. Windows 95 only.

R38 PD39

C MORTAL KOMBAT 3 90 GT Interactive, £44.99

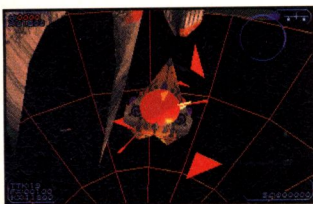
The latest version of the much-hyped 'gore-fest', complete with ludicrous cartoon-style blood spatters, fatality, babe-ality and 'friendship' finishing moves if you can work out the multiple button presses. An excellent two-dimensional beat 'em up.

R33 PD33

R THE MUPPET CD-ROM 87 Starwave/Ocean, £39.99

Hilarious outing featuring all your favourite sock-based characters in seven average(ish) arcade/puzzle games which sparkles with Muppet humour. Superb intro sequence.

R41 PD10



C NIHILIST 91 Philips, £39.99

Good-looking shoot 'em up that's basically a first-person viewed Asteroids. Loads of

variety, with mayhem, retro wire-frame and bizarre pool table levels, and even a bonus sub-game of Asteroids itself. Add to this a wide range of network options, a PWEI/Dog Eat Dog soundtrack and an in-game option to play your own CDs, and you have a minor corker.

R43

R PRIMAL RAGE 82 Time Warner Interactive, £39.99

Dinosaur-based beat 'em up in the sideways-on viewed Streetfighter mould (except you get to use your teeth a bit more). Good graphics, good gameplay: Jurassic Park for psychopaths.

R32 PD31

R PRINCE OF PERSIA 2 89 Broderbund, £12.99

Dated but nice-looking platform game with pointy shoes and pyjamas.

R5 T6

R PRIVATEER 75 Origin, £11.99

Wing Commander-style dogfighting, Elite-style trading.

R9 T10



C PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING 94 Electronic Arts, £39.99

The follow-up to Privateer finally gets some decent, fast and furious interstellar combat à la X-Wing. It also gets greatly improved graphics. Add top stars, five million bucks' worth of studio-based acting and an engrossing plot well told and you have the best space combat game ever.

R44

C PRO PINBALL: THE WEB 90 Empire Interactive, £34.99

Extremely realistic and gorgeous-looking game with a stonking soundtrack. There's only one table, but it's feature-packed - you can even nudge it from each side and the bottom. The best pinball experience you can get, short of buying a real Williams table.

R34 PD34

C QUAKE 96 ID Software/GT Interactive, £39.99

Quake?... Quake... Nope, it's gone. I can't really remember what this somewhat obscure little number's all about. But apparently it's quite good.

R43 T43

RAVAGE 72 Warner Interactive, £39.99

Run of the mill game-on-rails shoot 'em up that looks lovely but plays ugly, and is too short.

R46

RAYMAN 76 Ubisoft, £39.99

Playable though quickly irritating, unoriginal psx-converted platform game.

R36

C REBEL ASSAULT 2 90 LucasArts/VIE, £49.99

Gorgeous graphics, good solid gameplay and 'real' live action footage combine to make another thoroughly enjoyable, pre-rendered shoot 'em up experience for Star Wars fans. It even has a corker of a storyline.

R34 PD17, 29, 37

RESURRECTION: RISE 2 73 Acclaim/Mirage, £44.99

Nicks some ideas from other beat 'em ups and looks nice, but still falls short.

R37

R RISE OF THE TRIAD 82 US Gold, £9.99

One of the better Doom-alikes, but nowadays that's a bit like being one of the better Pong machine-alikes.

R26 PD26 T26

R ROAD RASH 95 84 Electronic Arts, £34.99

The motorbike-based beat 'em up finally makes it to the PC in Windows 95 form and turns out to be surprisingly good. It's hardly original in concept, but it's well put together and a good laugh. And it's got a link-up mode to bludgeon your friends.

R44

R ROBOTRON X 80 GT Interactive, £39.95

It's Robotron X, Jim - but not as we know it. Better graphics, swirly camerawork, but exactly the same gameplay. Run about, shooting wildly at thousands and thousands of robots in an enclosed, claustrophobic arena. Then do it again. And again. And again. A good modernisation of a classic game - but dashed repetitive.

R45 PD46

R SCORCHED PLANET 82 Virgin, £44.99

First-person viewed shoot 'em up that has you piloting a morphable hovery jet-cum-tank thing through eight levels, subdivided into three stages each. Intuitive controls, lightning-fast gameplay (in lo-res) and nasty enemies combine to make it one of the more action-packed and enjoyable blasters around.

R44

SHATTERED STEEL 71 Interplay, £39.99

Yet another HERC-based stomper that proves to be just a little dull in the long term.

R46 PD43

R SLIPSTREAM 5000 88 Gremlin Interactive, £9.99 (Budget)

Hovory racing game that's rather like the much-hyped Wipeout except it runs at a good speed, is very playable with PC controllers, and costs a whole heap less.

R27 T34

S.T.O.R.M. 70 Electronic Arts, £39.99

Scramble lookalike that's pretty but much too hard.

R38

STRIFE 70 Velocity/3DO, £39.99

You can talk to people in it. And it uses the old Doom engi zzzzz.

R43

R SWIV 3D 85 SCI, £39.99

The Amiga, SNES and MegaDrive classic gets a three-dimensional upgrade à la Magic Carpet, and a Desert Strike on amphetamines approach. It's very fast, and very hard, even with power-ups that enhance your weapons to the point where you'd worry about the safety of the planet if you had any conscience at all. Luckily, you don't.

R45 PD45

R TEMPEST 2000 85 Atari, £29.99

A 15-year-old Atari game gets a techno soundtrack and suddenly words like 'arcade classic' are being bandied around the office.

R37

R TERMINAL VELOCITY 80 US Gold, £12.99

The first of Apogee's 3D Realms games. Fly about in an anti-gravity sort of way, shooting everything in sight on the Magic Carpet-like levels; find the exit tunnel, warp to the next level; continue until bored.

R30 PD31 T29, 30

R TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK 85 VIE, £39.99

Shoot 'em up based on the first Terminator film with full freedom of movement in a true 3D world. Look up and down (or die), drive cars, blow the shit out of terminators, robots and flying ships and get lost in the enormous war-torn levels.

R35 PD34 T40

C TERRA NOVA 90 Virgin, £39.99

Stomping-about-in-robot-suits, shooting-the-crap-out-of-stuff game from the people behind System Shock. In fact, the game plays like System Shock Outdoors. Complex controls and less than stunning sound effects and graphics, but it's very enjoyable nonetheless.

R39 PD38

R TIME COMMANDO 86 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Classy-looking computer-rendered beat/hack/stab/shoot 'em up with nice backgrounds and lots of walking-about bits in which you get whisked to different eras in time to find something that may or may not be some kind of weird computer virus thing. We may never know. But you're dying to find out, aren't you?

R42 PD44



C THE FIGHTER 94 Virgin Interactive, £49.99

Follow-up to X-Wing stuffed with loads of new features and, more importantly, the chance to succumb to the Dark Side, dress up in some really cool plastic uniforms and shoot the nuts off that arsehole Luke Skywalker. If that's not overstating things.

R18 PD29 T19, 20 21

THE FIGHTER: DEFENDER OF THE EMPIRE 73 LucasArts, £19.99

Two new missions and a missile gunboat.

R24

R TILT 80 Virgin Interactive, £34.99

Another of the thousands of pinball games available to people with itchy flipper fingers and no loose change. There are six tables to choose from, and a variety of ways to view them, but it doesn't have the depth of gameplay provided by Pro Pinball: The Web.

R34 PD34

C TOMB RAIDER 95 Core Design, £44.95

A Prince of Persia-style platform game with a superb 3D engine that has something for everyone: the aforementioned platform action, tricky puzzles, scary things attacking you and a good storyline. There are also shitloads of animals to shoot for Royal readers, prodigious feats of leaping about for gymnastics fans, and underwater sections for Patrick Duffy fans. And the main character's a chick with large triangular gazongas.

R45 RD45 PD46

TOTAL MANIA 68 Eidos Interactive/Domark, £39.99

X-COM/Crusader hybrid that looks nice but will bore the arse off you in the long term.

R41 PD41

C ULTIMATE DOOM 90 GT Interactive, £29.99

Doom with an extra episode. PC Zone helpful hint - buy Issue 30 and get it for free. Aren't we good to you?

R29 Free upgrade pack 30 T40

escape

INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEN

Not suitable for children



*Baywatch
blah blah ostriches
blah blah 25 pints blah
blah vasectomy...*

*Oh Marie, you've
been surfing those gossip
websites instead of
ironing again!*

Inside Issue 3

Who's doing who

We reveal how you can find the gossip that the newspapers are too afraid to print

On-line purity tests

Ever received oral sex from someone with braces? Ever had sex with an animal? Ever used a feather during sex? Find out how pure you really are

Plus:

- How to pull in a cyber bar
- You can get anything pierced these days - we reveal all
- Discover how Destruction Derby II compares to real-life stock car racing
- Pub quizzes like you've never seen them before
- Hundreds of games, Net sites and multimedia titles reviewed and rated

Pix: Photodisc



Issue 3 on sale Thursday 13th February

VIRTUA COP 78

Sega, £39.99

Addictive, mouse-driven conversion of the arcade hit that just doesn't have enough to it long term.

R16 PD16

VIRTUA FIGHTER PC 79

Sega PC, £29.99

Same game, but doesn't need the accelerator card and markedly slower as a result.

R12 PD11

WILLIAMS ARCADE CLASSICS 90

GT Interactive, £29.99

If you really want to use your million-dollar multimedia Pentium to play conversions of prehistoric arcade games that have all the graphical sophistication of a drawing by Stevie Wonder, then this is probably the compilation for you. Arcade-perfect versions of *Defender*, *Robotron 2084*, *StarGate Defender 2*, *Joust*, *Bubbles* and *Sinistar*. Classic '80s arcade action.

R34 PD Any shareware distributor

WING COMMANDER IV 85

Origin/Electronic Arts, £44.95

The filmed sequences with real sets and proper actors cost over \$8m to make, and it shows. A genuinely absorbing plot with a strong storyline provides the most complete cinematic gaming experience to date. Sadly, the gameplay bit is less impressive and nor is it advanced since the last version. You'll also need a seriously meaty PC to run it.

R35

WITCHAVEN 88

US Gold, £29.99

Doom-style hack 'em up. You won't find any firing spells from a safe distance here - it's hand-to-hand combat all the way. This sits midway between *Heretic* and *Ultima Underworld* (but better than *Heretic*). Fast, ferocious, and very bloody.

R33 PD33 T35, 36

WITCHAVEN 2 72

US Gold, £29.99

More like an add-on disk than a sequel.

R10

X-WING 90

LucasArts, £44.95

Excellent *Star Wars*-based space combat game that spawned a myriad offshoots.

R2 PD17, 29 T1

ADVENTURE

ACE VENTURA 72

7th Level, £TBA

Slick point-and-click adventure, possibly aimed at kids.

R16

ALONE IN THE DARK 3 95

Infogrames, £34.99 (compilation)

AITD 3 was supposedly the last in the trilogy, except that *Time Gate* could easily be AITD 4. Available as a budget compilation containing all three AITD games - and given the difficulty level, this gives you approximately five years of gameplay for your money. Barg-ola!

R21, 23 PD24 T27

AZRAEL'S TEAR 90

Mindscape, £44.99

Atmospheric blend of two first-person viewed classics, *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock*, with yet another Knights Templar theme. Engaging, tricky, but very rewarding.

R39 PD38 T15, 16

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD 87

Viacom New Media, £39.99

Point-and-click adventure featuring all the regular characters from the series. Snappy and amusing dialogue, some unusual sub-games and plenty of puzzle-solving for adventure game traditionalists. Cool, huh?

R35 PD35

BIOFORCE 95

Electronic Arts, £44.99

Stunning-looking, action-packed adventure game with built-in unarmed (and armed) combat entirely free of charge. Extremely difficult, its tension derives from the race against time scenario.

R25 PD26 T28

BURN-CYCLE 85

Philips, £44.99

One of the better interactive movie-type adventures. Good pacing, a sharp plot and plenty of variety in the gameplay. Wins Most Unlikely Use Of A Colon In Game Title award.

R32



BROKEN SWORD 84

Virgin Interactive, £44.99

'Interactive cartoon' from the team who brought you *Beneath A Steel Sky*. Gameplay tends toward lengthy conversations thanks to an icon-based speech interface which doesn't allow you to phrase questions yourself. Gorgeous scenery, and well worth a look - more than a match for many of the FMV interactive movies around.

R12

CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD 68

Psygnosis, £39.99

Boring puzzler set in the time of King Arthur.

R39

DAGGERFALL 65

Virgin Interactive/Bethesda, £44.95

Ambitious yet flawed try at an open-ended D&D jobbie, that ends up just being a jobbie.

R13 T17

DAY OF THE TENTACLE 87

LucasArts, £39.99

A very taxing adventure with very American humour which isn't quite up to the standard of the classic LucasArts offerings.

R7 PD17 T7

THE DIG 87

LucasArts/VIE, £44.99

A return to the good old days of classic point-and-click adventures for LucasArts, although it doesn't actually reach the heights of *Indiana Jones*, *Monkey Island* or *Sam And Max*. A good, involving story, a fair amount of atmosphere, and it's not too difficult to get through.

R34 PD32 T37

DISCWOULD 96

Psygnosis, £49.99

A staggeringly high score for this very difficult adventure game based around the books of Terry Pratchett. It's funny, if you like the boy Pratchett's humour, extremely entertaining - and very, very hard.

R22 PD23 T50, 44



DISCWOULD II 93

Psygnosis, £44.99

This sprawly sequel is one of the best adventure games around, based loosely around Pratchett's books 'Mort' and 'Reaper Man'. Unlike the first game, you won't find

yourself wandering around endlessly, lost and stuck, because they've lowered the difficulty to a more manageable level. It's still challenging, as well as enjoyable and funny, with the gameplay heavily influenced by classics like *Monkey Island*.

R14 PD14

ECSTATIC 93

Psygnosis, £44.99

Alone In The Dark-style gameplay with ellipsoid-generated characters, no inventory and a far higher pert buttocks-count. Difficult, with some tricky puzzles, and the constant running away can be wearing until you get some serious pointy weaponry.

R21 T24

FULL THROTTLE 92

LucasArts/Virgin, £44.99

Main biker-guy has a voice so deep it makes Lee Marvin sound like John Inman. Sadly, it has a god-awful sub-Road Rash arcade beat 'em up on bikes bit in the middle which spoils the flow of the whole thing. Apart from that, it's a cool point-and-clicker.

R27 PD26 T29

GABRIEL KNIGHT 90

Sierra On-Line, £44.99

Tim Curry does the voice for the hero in a louche camp style in this tense, some would say brooding, atmospheric thriller.

R11 T32

GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN 88

Sierra, £44.99

Well-acted FMV-based interactive movie with a complex plot that actually has a fair bit of gameplay, although it's not the hardest game you'll ever come across.

R36 T39, 40

THE GENE MACHINE 87

Vic Tokai, £44.99

Pleasant point-and-clicker in the style of the LucasArts classics, except that it's British. Nice backdrops, an interesting HG Wells/Jules Verne storyline set in the 19th Century, and humour that will make you smile. Puzzles may be a tad easy for rock-hard adventurers, but still enjoyable.

R11

HARVESTER 83

Virgin Interactive, £39.99

Despite lorry-loads of FMV footage, *Harvester* provides plenty of traditional, old-fashioned adventure gameplay. Those with sensitive stomachs may find it all a bit gore-tastic; the politically correct may object to voyeuristic shots of a chick hanging around in suspenders and undies; those who don't care either way will find proper puzzles, an involving plot, and interesting sub-plots.

R12



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS 93

LucasArts, £12.99

Budget, all-talkie version of one of the best adventures ever made. Three ways to play, depending on how hard you want to think, whether you like an occasional bout of fisticuffs, or whether you want a bit of help from your lippy, sidekick Sophia.

R37 (budget)

INDIANA JONES AND HIS DESKTOP ADVENTURES 80

LucasArts, £39.99

Weird desktop adventure game-cum Windows 'toy' that you can load whenever

you want to try your hand at some puzzles featuring the eponymous whip-wielder.

R11 PD10

KINGDOM O'MAGIC 82

SCI, £44.99

Point-and-click adventure that can be amusing at times, but would have been better without the stereotypical minorities and the huge-breasted chick.

R38 PD38 T11

KING'S QUEST VII 93

Sierra, £44.99

Excellent adventure game with some mind-boggling puzzles, marred only by the fact that everyone, even the supposedly evil ogres, tries to be cuter than Hathaway out of *ER*'s top lip.

R24 T32

KYRANDIA 3 87

Virgin, £29.99

Good quality adventure, now available as part of the Westwood Studios 10th Anniversary Pack, along with the first two games (*Legend Of Kyrandia*, *Hand Of Fate*) and *Dune II* and *Lands Of Lore*. Well worth 30 quid.

R23, 40 (compilation) T26

LEISURE SUIT LARRY 7: LOVE FOR SAIL 79

Sierra, £44.99

If you like looking at cartoon breasts and sitting through some of the worst jokes in the history of mankind, this is the game for you.

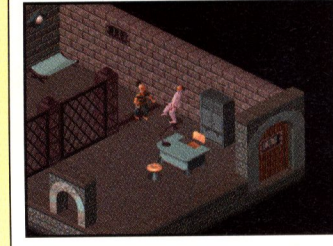
R16 PD13

LIGHTHOUSE 80

Sierra, £39.95

Myst-style adventure that starts off normal and gets very weird very quickly, with baby-napping demons and suchlike. Very ponderous and puzzle-based, it's ponderous and tricky. So avoid it if you're stupid and impatient. That means you, Paul Gascoigne...

R15



LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 93

Electronic Arts, £44.99

Pretty-looking, gorgeously animated, isometrically-viewed adventure. Quite hard and the auto-save feature can be a pain in the arse, but worth investing some time in.

R21

LOST FILES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES: CASE OF THE ROSE TATTOO 70

Electronic Arts, £39.99

Point-and-click adventuring featuring everyone's favourite drugged-up violinist. No, not Vanessa Mae.

R17

MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND 80

Activision, £34.99

Another top title featuring the only loveable creatures ever to be based on underwear. This time it's a point-and-click adventure inspired by their latest film, aimed squarely at children. However, the blend of video and sumptuous hand-drawn backgrounds, easy-to-follow adventures and humorous sub-games will charm adults as much.

R14 PD16

THE NEVERHOOD 79

DreamWorks Interactive, £49.99

Simplistic point-and-click adventure with linear structure and plasticine characters.

R15

NORMALITY 90

Gremlin Interactive, £44.99

Ambitious point-and-clicker with first-person viewpoint that can drone on a bit at times but

has its fans in the office. The hero's a bit of a dork, but at least it's trying something new.

R38 PD36



C THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE 92
Virgin/Access, £44.95

The nice-looking follow-up to *Under A Killing Moon* features the same private dick hero, and is an engrossing, FMV-based adventure with decent puzzles and an absorbing plot. And as there are three different paths through the game, it's VFM as well as FMV. It also comes with a novel based on the game, which, if you read it first (and apparently it's quite good) will spoil it completely.

R43

PHANTASMAGORIA 50
Sierra, £49.99

Interactive movie that forgot the interactive bit.

R19

R POLICE QUEST IV: OPEN SEASON 80
Sierra On-Line, £44.99

Another in the long line of procedurally-based cop games. Walk about, take notes, eat doughnuts, beat Rodney King to a bloody pulp. It's all in a day's work at LAPD HQ.

R19 T15

R POLICE QUEST: SWAT 83
Sierra, £49.99

If you wanna make it as a SWAT Team member, ya gotta practice. And practice. And practice. Gun-toting cop fun, still procedurally heavy but only needs light-gun compatibility to make it perfect.

R36

R PRISONER OF ICE 88
Infogrames, £44.95

The second in Infogrames' Cthulhu-based series of adventures; follow up to *Shadow Of The Comet*. Good plot, good atmosphere.

R29 PD31

R QUEST FOR FAME 80
IBM, £49.95

This music biz-based adventure uses Aerosmith's music and has you playing your way from obscurity to megastardom, using a plastic plectrum you can strum on a tennis racket, a spaghetti strainer or even your partner's pubic hair, if you want. Strum well enough to succeed and you'll end up playing with Aerosmith themselves...

R35

C REALMS OF THE HAUNTING 93
Gremlin Interactive, £44.99

Epic stuff. A mean, extremely scary action/adventure of trapped souls, black magic and vicious bastards. Nicely interwoven plots, great dialogue, good puzzles and lots of shooting combine to make it an extremely playable, and very addictive, game that will have you cacking your pants on a regular basis. Comes with a free box of Wet-Ones.

R47

R ROBINSON'S REQUIEM 85
Prism, £19.99 (Addictive compilation)

Original but flawed survival game in which you utilise your wits, your huge range of prescription drugs and your hand-to-hand combat skills. The only game ever to give you the option to amputate your own limbs.

R16

C SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD 93
US Gold, £12.99 (budget)

An all-time high point in point-and-click adventures. You control the eponymous

heroes (a dog and rabbit Freelance Police team) in their pursuit of Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Girl who's been abducted from a freak show. All-talkie with a funny script and a good mix of puzzles. LucasArts at their very best: an essential purchase at this price.

R11, 16 PD17 T13, 14, 32

SANTA FE MYSTERIES: THE ELK MOON MURDER 72
Activision, £44.95

Superior multimedia murder-mystery fun centring around a Native American community.

R44

R SERPENT ISLE: ULTIMA VII PART 2 89
Origin, £34.99

Origin's flair for storytelling and atmosphere makes this a corker of an RPG.

R3 T5

R SHADOW OF THE COMET 88
Virgin White Label, £12.99

Decent all-talkie adventure based on HP Lovecraft's 'Cult Of The Cthulu' books. A case of involving storyline winning out over less than top-notch presentation, but despite the odd fault Lovecraft fans will love it.

R18, 38 T5, 6, 7

R SIMON THE SORCEROR 2 84
AdventureSoft, £29.99

Simon the Ginger-Haired, Pony-Tailed Poppy Sorcerer (to give him his full title) returns with DMs and another batch of smart-arsed jokes. Chris Barrie-less (as if anyone cares), it's still a good all-talkie point-and-clicker. Now available in a budget package with the prequel and a free (disgusting) T-shirt.

R30 T10, 32, 46

C SPYCRAFT 91
Activision, £49.99

Win95-only 'spy simulator'. Unfortunately free of fast cars, birds in swimsuits and spectacular stunts, but loads of FMV and chokka with puzzles, spy satellites, decoding routines and original features. Engrossing.

R38

C STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY 94
MicroProse, £49.99

There are shitloads of *Star Trek* adventure games, but this one is the best. If you like sticking a pesty on your forehead and prancing about with your trousers tucked in your Chelsea boots, this is the one for you.

R27 PD27 T31, 32

THREE SKULLS OF THE TOLTECS 70
Revivision/Warner, £39.95

Point-and-clicker with tedious conversations, crap jokes and very low difficulty level.

R45

R TIME GATE 84
Infogrames, £44.99

From the team that brought you the *Alone In The Dark* series comes a game that looks remarkably like *ATD*. Knights Templar-based fun, with all the joys and faults - of *ATDs* 1-3.

R36 PD36 T38

C TOONSTRUCK 93
Virgin Interactive, £44.99

A Sam And Max-style comedy adventure, which, despite revolving around the hackneyed idea of a comic artist being sucked into his own creations, turns out to be very good. There's a steadily increasing difficulty level that's pitched just right, a good interface, and large dollops of humour to help you on your way. And the real actor/cartoon background interaction is absolutely seamless.

R45

C ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS 94
Origin, £44.95

Superb first-person viewed adventure that's never been matched.

R1 T2, 3, 4, 20

ZORK NEMESIS 65

Return To Zork follow-up abandons gameplay entirely and opts for a *Myst*-like approach.

R39

DRIVING

R BIG RED RACING 87
Domark, £9.99

Like a first-person perspective *Micro Machines*, it has you hairing about in different wacky vehicles (snow ploughs, monster trucks etc) - and you can even recreate *The Italian Job* in a mini.

R37 PD40

P DAYTONA USA 20
Sega, £39.95

It was disappointing on the Saturn. It's even worse on the PC.

R46

C DESTRUCTION DERBY 90
Sony Interactive, £44.99

A cross between a racing game and smash 'em up where you chalk up more points for wrecking opponents' cars than for winning a race. Great graphics and initially exhilarating, but one-player gameplay isn't the deepest you'll ever find. Plenty of network options, though.

R33 PD34 T38, 43



R DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 86
Psygnosis, £45.99

This year's version of the popular ram-raiding sim is better all-round: the wider tracks offer better racing, have jump ramps and alternative routes; there are improved graphics and more areas of the car to fly off into the crowd; more spectacular collisions and stunts; and, most importantly, a much better one-player option. But the network mode will apparently be on a data disk, and there are a fair few better driving games around this year - hence the lower score.

R46 PD47

R F1 GRAND PRIX MANAGER 85
MicroProse, £44.99

Comprehensive simulation that has you hanging from your Ron Dennis 'standing up' frame and managing a Formula 1 team through an on-going Championship, taking charge of everything from trying to organise tyre deals and team sponsorship to the hiring and firing of prima-donna drivers. Could be F1 anorak - sorry, shell suit - heaven.

R34 PD38

R F1 MANAGER 89
Europress, £39.99

For the F1 anorak for whom *F1 Grand Prix Manager* isn't quite painstakingly detailed enough. The emphasis is even more heavily biased towards the resources side of things, so you'll be up to your ears in balance sheets, regulations, sponsors, statistics and merchandising, as well as R&D, design, assembly and, oh yes, racing.

R44

C FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 92
MicroProse, £14.99

The classic F1 racing game, now available in a number of compilations or on its own. Still great after all these years.

T4

C FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 95
MicroProse, £30.00

Superb upgrade to the classic racing game with menus and set-up screens to tinker about with to your heart's content, and the game engine is unmatched. To get the textured graphics in all their glory you'll need a decent Pentium, but it still looks good and is playable in low-res.

R36

R FATAL RACING 88
Gremlin Interactive, £39.99

Full-contact arcade driving game like a cross between *Ridge Racer* and the ancient Amiga classic, *Stunt Car Racer*. Excellent graphics and 16 tracks, some of which are spectacular. Unfortunately, it looks crap on anything less than a Pentium.

R32 RD33

R GRAND PRIX MANAGER 2 80
MicroProse, £39.99

An improved interface (although the inter-related menu structure is still a long way from being seamless), and a few improvements like better feedback from your drivers, introduced no doubt by complaints from purchasers of the original, makes it the best of the three F1 management games. But more of a bug-fix than a sequel, and ought to be priced as such. Hence the lower score.

R47

R HI-OCTANE 83
Bullfrog, £19.99

Anti-gravity racing game based on the *Magic Carpet* engine with lots of shooting of opponents, but a disconcertingly short view ahead of your car/truck/hovery thing (just as in *Magic Carpet*, in fact).

R29 PD29

C INDYCAR RACING 93
Virgin Interactive, £9.99 (b)

Definitive simulation of the art of racing about in circles with almost all the same ingredients as the sequel; now available on budget in a number of compilations or on its own for a tenner.

R10 RD10

C INDYCAR RACING EXPANSION PACK 94
Virgin Interactive, £17.99

Five excellent extra tracks (and one more roundabout). Of course, it would have been nice if they'd been in the original game.

R19

C INDYCAR 2 90
Papyrus/Virgin, £34.99

Follow-up to the first oval circuit racing game which really doesn't add much. It does have glorious SVGA graphics, but if you already have *IndyCar 1*, there's little reason to buy this. Get *F1GP2* instead.

R34 PD34, 43

MEGARACE 2 79
Mindscape, £44.95

An improvement on the original (which isn't hard) but there are loads of better driving games around - and they aren't 'on rails'.

R43 T447

C MICRO MACHINES 2 93
Codemasters, £12.99

Brilliant sequel with different tracks and the same instant appeal. Also comes with a nifty little track designer.

R29 PD29

MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 78
Microsoft, £44.99

Good, fun racing game in trucks with tyres the size of Pluto. Part *Stunt Car Racer*, part *NASCAR Racing*.

R44 PD45

R NASCAR RACING 84
Virgin, £44.99

Roundabout racing in armour-plated saloon cars from the people who brought you *IndyCar*.

R23 PD22

C NASCAR RACING 2 92
Sierra, £34.99

Excellent upgrade to an excellent game: car set-ups are all on one screen, and navigating through a race weekend is easier; there's SVGA everything, but the 3D engine has been improved so that it runs a lot more smoothly than its predecessor; the cars are more controllable, making it a lot more playable. And it's a lot more atmospheric, thanks to the steady stream of messages in

your headset from your pitside observer. There are also IPX network options, or modem and serial links for multi-player fun. But it's a heavyweight sim: for arcade fun, go elsewhere.

R16 PD15

R THE NEED FOR SPEED 89 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Race extremely expensive cars down the longest stretches of highway in America without a turn-off, skid about to leave rubber on the road, crash spectacularly... then do it all again. Or look at the multimeaja bits, showing how obscenely expensive your car really is. 3D-style crash and burn action comes to the PC.

R31 PD31 T40



C NETWORK Q RAC RALLY 94 Europress, £39.99

Absolutely superb driving game that oozes atmosphere like a running sore in a heatwave. Every stage of the eponymous rally has been lovingly re-created, allowing you to drive like a maniac down single-track roads into blind corners with the best of them. Great stuff.

R41 PD41

C SCREAMER 2 93 Virgin Interactive, £39.95

For its sequel, Screamer abandons trying to do a Ridge Racer in favour of doing a Sega Rally, and manages it very well. It's very fast, chocka with trackside detail and has more tracks and options than the first game, with four different championships to play through. More arcadey than Network Q RAC Rally, but without the longevity.

R45 PD46

R SUPERKARTS 82 Virgin Interactive, £29.99 (budget compilation)

The PC's attempt at a Super Mario Kart clone, now available (with IndyCar Racing and FIGP I) on the White Lines compilation. You get fast-moving, arcade action all the way, complete with a network option.

R41 PD19

R TEAM F1 88 Electronic Arts, £39.99

F1 management game that's even more comprehensive than FIGP Manager. Starting from scratch, you are responsible for everything from bank loans, R&D, sponsors, wind tunnel and engine testing through to office expansion, manufacturing contracts and industrial espionage. Overall it's a bit fiddly and confusing, especially as it's played against the clock. Ultimately worth the slog.

R42

WIPEOUT 78 Sony Interactive, £44.99

Ineffectual and disappointing conversion of top PlayStation anti-gravity racing game.

R34

PUZZLES

THE SEVENTH GUEST 60 Trilobyte, £44.99

Gorgeous-looking puzzle game with weak gameplay in the style of Myst.

R1

THE 11TH HOUR 67 Trilobyte/VIE, £49.99

Follow-up to The 7th Guest with more puzzles in fancy settings.

R35



C BAKU BAKU ANIMAL 90 Sega PC, £29.99

Sega's PC boys finally come good in a big way with the coolest puzzle game around. Tetris or Puyo Puyo-style gameplay has you matching up cutesy animals and their food to clear the screen. Great fun in single-player, with a fab two-player single-screen option and a rather excellent kicking soundtrack.

R42 PD45

LEMMINGS 3D 71 Psygnosis, £39.99

Same game, different angle.

R31 PD29

MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL 69 7th Level, £39.99

Mildly diverting, if over-familiar, puzzle-based interactive picture book of the film. Sort of.

R42

MYST 67 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Puzzle game set amid pretty backdrops. Mac owners like it.

R45 PD16 T17

SIMULATION

C A-10 CUBA 90 Activision, £39.99

Not the most stunning graphical exercise you'll ever see in a flight sim, it forsakes all that new-fangled texture-mapping stuff for good old fashioned lumpy polygons. But it's one of the more enjoyable offerings to have surfaced in recent times, and has a good flight model and an excellent sense of altitude. There's a whole, working world in there for you to fly around in (and shoot the shit out of). We couldn't drag our reviewer away from it.

R47 PD17

C AH-64D LONGBOW 90 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Great-looking chopper sim with good music and a great interface that tries to be a game. Be warned: even on a P133 it can go all jerky in hi-res, and it needs 97MB hard disk space. And there's no network play either. But it looks and plays fab.

R40

R AIR POWER 84 Mindscape, £44.99

Another flight sim set in a parallel universe from Rowan, combining the wars-type aircraft with a fantasy strategy game in which you have to use planes, launched from airships, to take over the country.

R30 PD31



C APACHE LONGBOW 96 Digital Integration, £39.99

The best helicopter flight model around - which means it's remarkably easy to roast your bony ass in a collision with Mother

Earth. Nothing comes close to matching it for authenticity, tactical planning and spot-on handling, but if it's arcade thrills and spills you want, go for Comanche vs Werewolf.

R31 PD30

R ARMORED FIST 86 US Gold/Novalogic, £12.99

The good-looking, sophisticated tank sim that sounds like a very scary sex aid. Comanche on wheels. Er, tracks.

R22

C ATF 92 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Take a seriously spruced-up US Navy Fighters engine combined with a large number of 'conceptual' planes with different flight models; add an interactive reference guide courtesy of Jane's and a complex mission-building option and you get a seriously good flight sim for propeller-heads everywhere.

R38

C COMANCHE 90 Novalogic, £29.99

Great-looking arcade chopper action. Now available on World Of Combat budget compilation, with Armored Fist and Wolfpack.

R16 T6, 44

R COMANCHE VS WEREWOLF 88 Novalogic/US Gold, £39.99

Take the original Comanche chopper game, then chuck in all the add-on missions and a completely new extra game which lets you play two-player modem or serial link-up battles. Not the best flight model around, snooty propeller-head purists will sneer, but it's a good arcade blast with excellent graphics.

R33

R DAWN PATROL 80 Empire Interactive, £44.99

Nice-looking WWI flight sim that lays claim to being an 'interactive book'. Meaning, you sit through loads of garbage between dogfights.

R21 PD21

C EF2000 97 Ocean/DID, £49.99

The flight sim with something for everyone, from complex missions in an on-going war scenario to jump-right-in-and-start-blasting arcade thrills. Based on a plane that isn't even finished yet, the flight model's so good they're using it to train pilots.

R31 PD32

C F-22 LIGHTNING II 90 Novalogic, £45.99

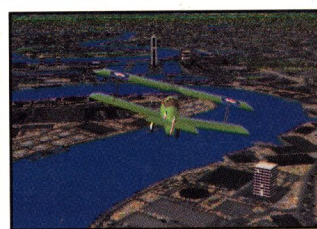
The first Novalogic flight sim not to use VoxelSpace technology is also the first to introduce a little intelligence into their usual arcadey approach. The terrain graphics are unmatched, other planes look great and the sound effects are loud and effective. There's also a nice mission builder - but no multi-player options. The flight model and approach seem to be 'I want to be liked' - some think it's a bit easy. Which makes it the perfect 'My First Flight Sim'.

R45 PD47

R FAST ATTACK 86 Sierra, £39.99

Ultra complex but extremely rewarding Windows 95-only submarine sim. Newcomers to the genre might find the gameplay a bit too much of a nightmare to deal with.

R39

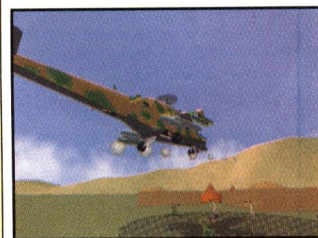


C FLIGHT SIM 95 95 Microsoft, £48.99

The inevitable appearance of a Windows 95

version of the ever-popular sim that actually teaches you to fly gets a big thumbs up. Good graphics, the chance to sit in the dark at home, fly around the world and land on the M4.

R44



C HIND 90 Digital Integration, £44.99

It's from DI, so you already know that Hind is going to be a seriously heavy simulation. The emphasis is placed on hyper-realism rather than presentation, so it will run on low-spec machines - but it's harder than juggling atoms. Includes loads of multiplayer options though, so you can die among friends.

R40

R HORNET NAVAL STRIKE FIGHTER 80 Spectrum Holobyte, £44.99

Electronic Battlefield System (EBS) add-on for Falcon 3, which allows you to fly eponymous plane in network scraps or standalone missions.

R15

C JETFIGHTER 3 91 EIDOS Interactive, £39.99

The latest in the Jetfighter series boasts a geographically accurate map of most of South America to have aerial fun within. There are loads of extremely hectic missions - maybe a bit too hectic - and a walk-aboutable aircraft carrier from which you plan your next mission. The padlock view is excellent, as is the enemy pilots' AI. It's all good, in fact - without really adding anything new.

R47

R KA-50 HOKUM 85 Virgin, £39.99

Excellent helicopter flight sim based around the ubiquitous, extremely effective Russian chopper. Very realistic and therefore very hard to fly properly.

R20

C NAVY STRIKE 90 Empire Interactive, £44.99

Two games in one: a flight sim, where you pilot a jet fighter in the slightly scary future, and a military command sim. Very atmospheric, it's one that grows on you the more you play it.

R33 T38

R SEA WOLF 83 Electronic Arts, £44.99

Hugely atmospheric submarine sim - but it's let down by a control interface from hell.

R15

C SILENT HUNTER 90 SSI/Mindscape, £39.99

Superb World War Two sub simulation that's really got the lot: cat-and-mouse stuff, creaking hulls, big explosions, depth charge attacks, blokes in chunky polo-neck sweaters... So atmospheric you'll find your ears popping with the pressure of being underwater. Probably.

R40

R SIM COPTER 85 Maxis, £39.99

A chopper simulation that lets you fly around cities from Sim City 2000. The flight model's alright, without being too tricky, but what really makes the game are the innovative and varied missions: airlifting people from the tops of towerblocks in gusting winds, following a fleeing villain's



BUYERS' GUIDE

car, putting out fires, etc. All in all enjoyable stuff – and the good news is that you don't need SC 2000.

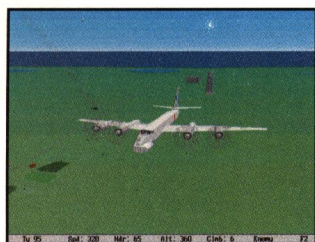
R47

STRIKE COMMANDER 65

Electronic Arts, £11.99

Some brilliant bits: cinematic sequences, amazing graphics and sound, varied missions. And some unbrilliant bits: flying isn't as good as the plot stuff and it's sluggish.

R3, 9, 13 T5



SU27 FLANKER 95

Electronic Arts, £11.99

Comprehensive flight sim based on the scariest aircraft ever built. Features the best flight model around, developed with input from top Russian pilots, but has less than dazzling graphics. Aimed at serious propeller-heads rather than those seeking lightweight thrills and spills (the instrument panels are even in Cyrillic script). No network or serial-link multiplayer options, but a better simulation than EF2000, MiG29 or Tornador.

R34 PD33

ITF 80

Ocean, £44.99

Near-future flight sim with graphics and sound that still stand up today.

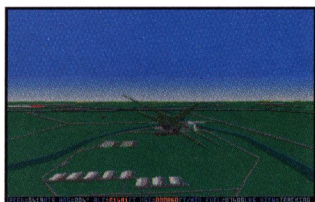
R15 T12, 16, 34

TOP GUN 92

Mindscape, £44.99

An outstanding flight simulation with a cinematic storyline and loads of atmosphere, it's let down slightly by misleading views and a hi-res frame rate on a 4133 like a supertanker performing a U-turn. Still good, though.

R37 PD38 40



TORNADO 93

Digital Integration, £44.99

Still a benchmark for an in-depth flight simulation, *Tornado* is so deep that you'll need a bathysphere. Low-level attack sim with excellent ground visuals. Definitely not for beginners.

R6

US NAVY FIGHTERS 90

Electronic Arts, £44.99

One of the best-looking, most accurate flight sims, lacking only a multi-player facility.

R22 PD23

US MARINE FIGHTERS 92

Electronic Arts, £19.99

Add-on disk for *US Navy Fighters*, featuring US and Yank Harriers, Yaks, the Russian supersonic Harrier rival and a gunship version of a Hercules transport plane. Great stuff, but still no network mode.

R30

WINGS OF GLORY 78

Electronic Arts, £44.99

Very playable and good-looking WWI flight sim with tendency towards jerkvision.

R24 PD25

SPORT

ACTUA SOCCER 92

Gremlin Interactive, £34.99

Arcade action featuring all the major national teams (and Wales). Excellent graphics, thanks to a 3D polygonised pitch arrangement and more camera angles than a BBC costume drama. And despite one or two large faults in the gameplay, it's still the best of a poor bunch of PC footy games.

R34 RD34 PD35 T43

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 92

Domark, £44.99

The finest football management game ever made. Every team in England, thousands of players from all over the world, minutely adjustable playing styles and formations. The only management game where you feel that what you're doing has an effect.

R31 T38, 46

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 DATA DISKS 92

Domark, £9.99

The French, German and Italian leagues of last season, all on one disk.

EURO 96 70

Gremlin, £29.99

Or *Actua Soccer Again*. Not enough to warrant another full-price game.

R41

FIFA SOCCER 97 86

Electronic Arts, £39.99

The best version of FIFA to date features a nifty build-your-own-dream-team option, more leagues and teams than ever before, a database facility to play multiple leagues, and many improvements in the gameplay, including the ability to pass into space (gasp). And the players don't take over too much any more (at least not at the hardest level). There's even a new indoor game. It's harder, though, so if you struggled with previous versions, you won't exactly shine in this. And the perfect football game's still a long way off on the PC...

R46 PD46

FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL 85

Dynamix/Sierra, £44.99

Nicks all the best features from all the other baseball games around and combines them, to make the best of its kind around. It comes out every year with different features.

R22

FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO 85

Dynamix/Sierra, £44.99

The best American football game on the PC, combining a superb play-designer, great graphics, multiple camera angles and good arcade action.

R9

HYPERBLADE 80

Activision, £TBA

In the world of the sports game, 'futuristic' is usually a code word for 'shite', with very few exceptions. This is one of them – a fast, playable and very violent sort of ice-hockey-with-sabres thing. Unfortunately, it has no two-player-on-one-machine option, and it's very power hungry (P90/16MB minimum), or it would have scored even higher.

R46 PD45

IAN BOTHAM INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 70

Beam, £34.99

Good, playable conversion of SNES hit, with unnecessary and crap FMV footage.

R37

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE 78

Electronic Arts, £39.99

Final outing for EA's old, isometric FIFA engine. Playable enough, if you practise.

R46

LINKS LS 94

EIDOS Interactive, £44.95

The long-awaited re-vamp to the world's greatest golf sim gives you more gameplay

options, even more gorgeous graphics and a re-designed menu and view-selection system, making it better than ever. Includes a built-in upgrader for all the old data-disk courses you spent your wodge on in the past.

R43

MADDEN NFL 97 87

Electronic Arts, £39.95

This, the first incarnation of *Madden* on the PC for about six years, finally provides the sort of quality now taken for granted on the consoles, and so becomes the best American footy game on the PC.

R44 PD45

NBA LIVE 96 85

Electronic Arts, £44.99

Basketball gets the Virtual Stadium treatment: multiple angles for each camera, an expanded polystyrene crowd, three levels of difficulty and all the usual season play options. A bit muted graphically, and can be confusing when it gets crowded.

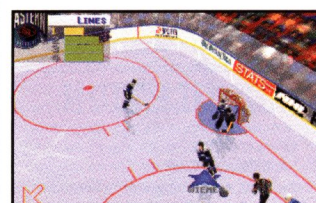
R37

NBA LIVE 97 92

Electronic Arts, £39.99

EA's basketball game comes good again, after last year's lacklustre effort. Beautifully put together, with excellent graphics and sound effects and music you can shuffle your feet to, it's action all the way. One of the best sports games on the PC at the moment. You can even create yourself as a player. If you want.

R47



NHL HOCKEY 97 90

Electronic Arts, £44.95

This year's release gets a handful of national sides thrown in (but it's rather patronising on the Scandinavian front) and the usual graphical tweaks. This time it's big close-ups of the refs picking up the pucks and whizzing about – hardly an essential element. But if you don't have an ice hockey game, this is the one to get. If you have one of these already, don't bother. Unless you absolutely must have the most recently completed season's statistics and teams.

R45

OVERLORD 85

Virgin Interactive, £39.99

Second World War flight sim based around – you guessed it – *Operation Overlord* (also known as the D-Day landings). Features mainly ground attack missions with the odd dogfight or bomber intercept, has two padlock views (count 'em) and some decent flight models.

R17

PGA TOUR GOLF 486 91

Electronic Arts, £19.99

(Budget compilation)
Not only excellent-looking but also great-playing, fine-smelling golf game, which is available in the *Essential Collections*: Sport compilation along with FIFA Soccer and Formula 1 Grand Prix.

R20

PGA TOUR '96 94

Electronic Arts, £44.99

There are two different courses on offer this time, and new Links-inspired windows that provide extra views of all the action. The main view graphics now look slightly less sharp than last year's model but at the same time give more sense of depth. If you're not that bothered about having the latest version, last year's game is cheaper, has more courses and loses absolutely nothing in gameplay.

R32 PD37 T43



PGA EUROPEAN TOUR 94

Electronic Arts, £44.99

Finally, a game featuring the people who actually won the Ryder Cup competition rather than the also-rans. A different development team has tweaked the ball physics so it responds better to the contours of the ground, which makes it the best arcade golf game. And it's Yank-free.

R38

SWOS 96/97 80

Time Warner, £29.99

Also available as a £9.99 upgrade if you still have your original *SWOS*, this is basically a tweak disk. The squads are up-to-the-minute. There are new features, many of which you wouldn't notice if you weren't told what they were (like your players performing headers standing still) and one or two additional 'management' features. It's hardly state of the art, but it takes you back to when playability was the prime concern in football games.

R46

TNN BASS TOURNAMENT 80

Electronic Arts, £39.99

Fishing tournament game that's more to do with amassing money than the joy of hooking big floppy gilled things. *Trophy Bass* is better. The Save the Whale people rather like this, allegedly. So it's not that popular in Japan...

R39

TROPHY BASS 85

Sierra, £39.99

Near-perfect simulation of the noble art, concerned more with the purity of thought and deed than the baser elements of money-grabbing tournaments. Comes with a voucher for a free bag of chips and a sachet of vinegar.

R39

ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER 2 80

Sierra, £39.95

Ultimate Soccer Manager 2 takes *Premier Manager* and quadruples it, dumping so much stuff on you to control that it almost creeps out of the realms of being a football management game entirely. Ground and property development, burger, beer and restaurant prices and sponsorship are just some of things you'll find yourself fretting over, as well as the football stuff like tactics, formations and set-piece moves. The ratings aren't that real, and it's no *Championship Manager*, but *Premier Manager* fans will like it.

R45 PD45

VIRTUAL POOL 91

Interplay, £44.99

Superbly implemented pool sim with intuitive controls and a multi-player network option. As close to real pool as you can get, apart from the little piles of coins on the side of the table. (And only 90 times the price.)

R28 PD27

STRATEGY

ACROSS THE RHINE 86

MicroProse, £44.99

Tank-based battle strategy game which takes a while to come to terms with thanks to a heavy duty manual and a less-than-intuitive multi-view interface. Great depth if you can get your head round it.

R30

R AFTERLIFE 88

Virgin/LucasArts, £44.99

God game modelled on *Sim City* in which you actually play God, 'zoning' areas of punishment and reward for the souls who come under your charge. Liberal helpings of humour, along with good longevity in the gameplay, mean you don't have to be Billy Graham to enjoy it either.

R40 PD39

R AIV NETWORKS 80

Infogrames, £44.99

A business sim that throws you in at the deep end of corporation management. Not nearly as easy to get into as the Maxis titles, unless you're a budding mover and shaker who doesn't do lunch.

R30

R ALIEN LEGACY 80

Sierra On-Line, £39.99

Another of the several million space strategy games vying for your dosh, but one of the better ones. A bit like a cheaper version of *Outpost* without the pretty bits. Daunting at first attempt, but it really does become much more addictive.

R20 T20

R ALLIED GENERAL 83

SSI/Mindscape, £44.99

Windows 95-based follow-up to the hugely successful *Panzer General* that should appeal to wargamers and casual dilettantes alike. One or two faults, but its simplicity should appeal.

R37 PD38



C ASCENDANCY 93

Virgin, £39.99

Take all the bits you loved from just about every strategy, god or warfare game, set it in the context of space exploration and planetary conquest, and you get *Ascendancy*. Get stuck into this and you can kiss goodbye to your social life, career and an acceptable level of personal hygiene.

R32

R BATTLEGROUND ARDENNES 84

Empire Interactive, £40.00

Serious and deep, deep strategy game that's the first to be designed exclusively for Windows 95. Dragging war games screaming into the '90s? Whatever next? Good graphics?

R35 PD34

R BATTLEGROUND GETTYSBERG 87

Empire Interactive, £39.99

Second in the Windows 95-based series. An excellent feel for the Gettysberg battles, complete with QuickTime movies and a Quick Start guide, but it needs 130MB of hard disk space for a full installation, or 60MB for a minimum. Which is quite a lot.

R37 PD39

BATTLEGROUND SHILON 78

Empire Interactive, £44.99

Another flawed attempt to bring the two worlds of computer wargames and tabletop miniature together.

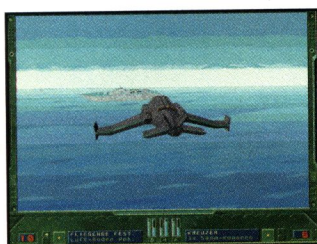
R45

BATTLEGROUND WATERLOO 74

Empire Interactive, £39.99

The third in the *Battleground* series, with more views and unit types, but dumber AI. And still no sign of a much needed scenario editor.

R42 PD46



C BATTLE ISLE 3: SHADOW OF THE EMPEROR 93

Blue Byte, £45.99

Third in the series of highly respected and very popular strategic battle games. Worth checking out if you like your strategy with a futuristic bent (ie your army jumper has silver patches on the elbows and shoulders).

R33 PD36

R BEDLAM 89

Mirage, £34.99

Take a range of isometrically viewed city levels, and add a dinky little armoured HERC, with more weapons of destruction at its disposal than the average aircraft carrier, and you have a highly addictive blasterama that's like *Syndicate* for the impatient, with weapon power-ups rather than an R&D team.

R43 PD42

BLOOD AND MAGIC 71

Interplay, £39.99

Command & Conquer wannabe with magic, that's slightly less exciting than watching newspaper yellow.

R46 PD46



C CIVILIZATION II 90

MicroProse, £44.99

Enhanced sequel in full 3D which can make things cluttered at times, especially if you have a number of windows open. Combat's been tightened up, with new units and 'hit points', and even experienced Civ players will find there's a lot to learn. (Note: Windows 95 or 3.1 with WinG only.)

R36 PD40 T43, 46

R CLOSE COMBAT 84

Microsoft, £44.99

A wargame that started out trying to be like the Avalon Hill boardgame *Squad Leader*, but ended up as something else entirely, *Close Combat* is like a sort of top-down viewed, realistic *Command & Conquer*. Based around the exploits of the US 29th Infantry Division in Normandy, it's a historically accurate, tactical combat simulation. May be the first in a new generation of real-time, super-realistic sims.

R45



R CYBERJUDAS 80

Empire Interactive, £39.99

Political strategy game in which you play the President of the United States (no, not the band), complete with an interface that lets you access every country in the world. Set up trade

agreements, negotiate peace settlements, track down traitors in your midst, or just shag an endless procession of beauty queens.

R41



C COLONIZATION 90

MicroProse, £44.99

Civilization I with more depth and better graphics, released to make a quick buck until Civ 2 appeared. Allegedly.

R20 T24, 37

C COMMAND & CONQUER 95

Virgin, £44.99

Take the strategy and resource management of *Dune 2*, add the fast-paced, real-time combat of *Cannon Fodder*, intelligent grunts, a myriad weapons, and the exploration elements of *Civilization* and you have a hugely addictive game.

R28 LE36 PD37 T38, 42

R COMMAND & CONQUER: COVERT OPERATIONS 84

Virgin, £14.99

Seriously difficult add-on missions for anyone who thinks they're a bit of a C&C whizz.

R38 T41

C COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 94

Westwood/Virgin, £34.99

Command & Conquer Squared: better graphics (SVGA in Win95), improved (but still not perfect) AI, more varied one-player missions and shitloads of new structures and units to develop. Most importantly, though, the easily set-up multi-player options (for modem and network action) give you extra multi-player options galore, with great new units and even fake buildings. Start a quick game, and you look up and your partner's left you and the goldfish are all dead. Top stuff.

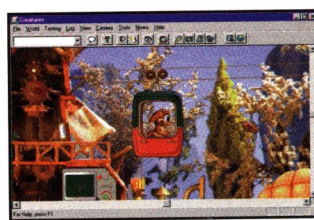
R47

CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD 75

Interplay, £44.99

Slow, cumbersome strategy game about... well, conquering the New World.

R39 PD36



C CREATURES 94

Warner Interactive, £29.99

We had to put this here because we don't really have an 'artificial life experiment' section. Maybe it's time we started. Anyway, this is the thing that's had boffins, programmers, social commentators and suchlike spurring into their underwear. Basically you raise, nurture and breed a race of artificial animals, teach them tricks and even a language, and breed from them to produce (hopefully) more advanced creatures. The more care you put into their development, the more interesting it gets and the more things they achieve, until in the end they're probably cleverer than you are. Much like parenthood, really. Astonishing stuff. And you can even trade them over the Internet.

R45

R CYBERSTORM 85

Sierra, £44.95

Interesting turn-based space exploration game with a *Dune*-ish plot, with you building

robots to mine ore from different planets in competition with other companies.

R43

R DUNE 82

Virgin, £44.95

Adventure/strategy mix that has you, Paul Atreides, setting up a spice mining op on Arrakis and attacking the evil Harknness.

R7

R DUNE II 89

Virgin, £34.99

Excellent real-time strategy game. Take one of the three tribes of Arrakis and struggle to beat the others until your mouse finger is a blood-soaked mess. The forerunner to the magnificent *Command & Conquer*. Available on *Power, Corruption and Lies* compilation.

R12



C FANTASY GENERAL 92

SSI/Mindscape, £44.99

The third in the series uses the same combat and movement engine as *Panzer* and *Allied General*, but it's the most exciting wargame (if that's not an oxymoron) so far.

R39 PD37

FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE 68

Gremlin Interactive, £44.99

Yet another asteroid-based mining, resource management space exploration thing. Strangely for a mining game, it lacks depth.

R46

C FRONTIER: ELITE II 95

Gametek, £39.99

Classic open-ended space trading game that lets you be anything you want.

R9

FRONTIER: FIRST ENCOUNTERS 78

Gametek, £39.99

Enhanced version of *Elite II*, bugged to jiggery.

R28

C GEARHEADS 90

Philips Media, £29.99

If we had a *Weird* category, this would be in it. It's a Windows 95-only sort of strategy/action game in which you set fighting wind-up toys against each other in an attempt to get them to the other side of the playing area. Surprisingly addictive.

R40 PD38



C GENE WARS 91

Electronic Arts/Bullfrog, £39.99

Has you competing against intelligent alien life-forms to produce an efficient food chain by selective breeding, under the watchful eye of some all-powerful superior beings who don't like dirty tricks. So you have to wait until they're not watching to set your mutants on the enemy. The winner gets to live. Very frenetic and very complicated.

R44



R **HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC 3** The 3DO Company, £44.99

Another in the seemingly endless mob of expansion-orientated strategy games, this time with a fantasy/D&D angle, which means there's an ongoing plot, and lots of characters to recruit to your army on your travels. Strikes a nice balance between resource management and exploration, and multi-player options help its longevity.

R47

R **THE HORDE 87** US Gold, £44.99

Slightly weird strategy game in which you try to develop and run a village, while waiting for the regular attacks by hideous, ravaging monsters. A bit like being a pub landlord around here, really.

R16 PD16

JAGGED ALLIANCE II: DEADLY GAMES 79 SirTech/VIE, £34.99

Turn-based strategy/combat game that's nail-biting and funny at the same time. And it comes with a free second CD for link-up games. Laudable stuff.

R47

R **LORDS OF THE REALM 2 80** Impressions/Sierra, £44.99

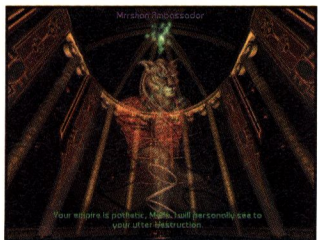
A resource management/strategy game set in the early mediaeval era, which retains the playability of the (now ancient) first version, while generally enhancing graphics, the interface and all that other stuff people like to see in a game these days. And it's quite good.

R47

R **MACHIAVELLI THE PRINCE 89** MicroProse, £44.99 (now on budget)

Colonization-style strategy game packed to the eyebrows with assassinations, plagues, pirates and intrigue. Get caught in bed with an underage boy! Sell guns to terrorists and get away with it! Well, the historical equivalent, anyway.

R28



C **MASTER OF ORION 2 92** MicroProse, £44.95

The world's most complicated space conquest strategy game has been updated, and it's as sophisticated as ever. Don't even think about buying this if you have no patience, or expect to find a quick answer to taking over the universe - we're talking several hours of gameplay just to get your bearings. There are more things to research than any other game of its type, and the game changes in scope the further into it you get. Extremely rewarding and very addictive. Kiss real life goodbye.

R45

R **M.A.X. 83** Interplay, £44.99

Combines old-fashioned turn-based strategy and resource management, in the usual

global domination kinda way, with this year's essential element, real-time combat. And does it very well, too, with the potential to develop anything from ships and planes to tanks and spies, and all in lovely svga-orama. Has a pronounced strategic slant, though. (Pronounced 'strategic slant'.) © Spike Milligan, 1955.)

R46 PD15

R **PERFECT GENERAL 82** Mirage Software, £44.99

Just one of the many thousands of playable and engrossing hex-based wargames waiting to take you in their big, comfortable arms and protect you for the rest of your days, you huge hunk of man, you.

R29

R **RISK 82** Hasbro Interactive, £39.99

The computer version of the best-selling board game that can permanently divide lifelong friends overnight. As well as a 'classic' version (ie straight board-game replica), it has an enhanced version, with loads of little features to make the whole thing more computer-friendly (you can take pawns to bargain with, there are five different game maps, different terrain, etc). And you can play over a network or modem. But it doesn't have real-time combat, which is disappointing.

R46



C **SETTLERS 2 92** Blue Byte, £39.99

A whole range of improvements in this sequel, including a new interface, more varied gameplay and far, far bigger levels. Frighteningly addictive.

R41 PD40 T47

C **SIM CITY 90** Maxis, £9.99

The original game that spawned a monster, it now looks really ropey and everyone has a copy of it somewhere.

R20 T22

C **SIM CITY 2000 92** Maxis, £39.99

Fully rotatable 3D version of the classic strategy game with far more depth (literally - you have to look after stuff underground now, too) and an excellent hierarchical menu system to control it all.

R13 T15

C **SPACE HULK 90** Electronic Arts, £11.99

Classic real-time strategy action game with liberal doses of death and destruction, huge gouts of blood and gore, and masses of tension and fear. A bit like *The Generation Game*, really.

R4 16 PD16 T6 7

C **SPACE HULK: VENGEANCE OF THE BLOOD ANGELS 90**

Windows 95 version of the 3DO version, featuring the best missions from the original game, a new campaign, new graphics and sounds and a full 3D engine. Looks fab, but is extremely hard.

R40

STAR CONTROL 3 75 Time Warner, £39.95

Four years in the making and a huge disappointment, losing much of the stuff that made SC2 so appealing and concentrating on resource management.

R46 PD47

C **SYNDICATE PLUS 92** Electronic Arts, £11.99

The classic isometric strategy game for amoral, homicidal maniacs, plus the data disks, plus a network play option.

R17



C **SYNDICATE WARS 95** Electronic Arts/Bullfrog, £44.95

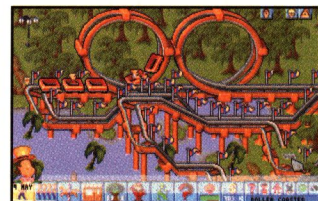
The long-awaited update to the classic strategy game is undoubtedly one of the most violent, addictive and fun games on any system, a fiendishly subversive sci-fi extravaganza that's also incredibly atmospheric. The more you play it, the better it gets. And there are loads of multi-player options, too.

R43 PD4 T47

R **TACOPS 81** Strategic Plus Software, £49.99

Excitement a-bungo and endless tactical possibilities make this basic-looking real-time strategy game a genuine must-have. Includes network play and play-by-mail/e-mail options.

R40 PD40



C **THEME PARK 93** Electronic Arts, £19.99

Design and run your own theme park, competing against others for the title of the best in the world. Design lots of nasty rides to make children sick. Force old ladies' hip-bones to pop out of their sockets with the G-force on your roundabout. And other stuff.

R17 T18, 19, 20, 33, 34

R **THIS MEANS WAR! 89** MicroProse, £44.99

A futuristic strategic wargame, using elements from both *Command & Conquer* and *Transport Tycoon*. Although it's slower-paced than *Command & Conquer*, it's engrossing once you've come to grips with the myriad options available.

R35 PD32

C **TRANSPORT TYCOON 94** MicroProse, £9.99

Follow-up to *Railroad Tycoon* that has you moving into the world of aeroplanes and buses and stuff. Beautifully designed and thought-out. Excellent, hierarchical drop-down menus, and a playing area that feels about four times the size of *Sim City 2000*'s. One of the best strategy games around. Rush out and buy it.

R21 PD21

C **UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN 93** MicroProse, £34.99

Absolutely top-notch strategy/resource management game with turn-based fighting against nasty big squishy blobby aliens that are quite scary if you screw your eyes up and pretend Rolf Harris did the artwork. Amazingly addictive and compelling. *UFO: Enemy Unknown* spawned the all-conquering sequel, *X-COM*. The game is available on the *Power, Corruption and Lies* compilation, with *Dune 2* and two others.

R15, 16 T16, 18, 33

R **WAGES OF WAR 89** 3DO, £39.99

Isometric-viewed strategic combat game that puts you in command of a troop of hardcore mercenaries in a post-holocaust world. Turn-based combat and the amount of mission planning that is involved means it's more suited to the genuine strategy buff than the adrenaline-seeking C&C junkie, but the range of actions open to you, varied missions and hardware and good graphics combine to make this every thinking man's skirmish combat dream.

R46

R **WARCRAFT 2: TIDES OF DARKNESS 82** Zabrac, £44.99

Very addictive and enjoyable sequel, with a good network option and some improved AI and controls.

R36 PD37 T37, 41

WARHAMMER 73 Mindscape, £39.99

An addictive Windows 95 real-time strategy game that's just that little bit too hard, with annoyingly fiddly controls to boot.

R37

R **WAR WIND 88** SSI/Mindscape, £44.99

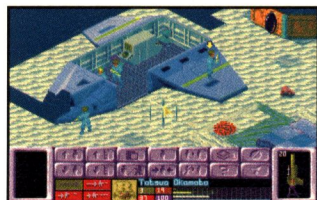
Basically, it's *Warcraft 2* with knobs on. *War Wind* is more or less the same game, but there are weirder creatures and loads more specialist units and lots of little extras that give you ten times the variety in the gameplay. You don't create units from scratch, but you can buy them and train them up into something else. And there are four widely differing races, which require quite different tactics to succeed, adding greatly to the longevity. If you liked *Warcraft*, you will definitely like this game.

R45 T47

R **WORMS 84** Ocean, £34.99

A cross between *Lemmings* and *Cannon Fodder* of limited one-player appeal, but brilliant in multi-player mode (up to four can play on a single machine). Turn-based combat revolves around using a variety of destructive weaponry to blow the arses well and truly off your opponents. A great laugh.

R33 PD32 T39



C **X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP 94** MicroProse, £44.99

The follow-up to *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, it's another turn-based strategy/combat classic, but this time set underwater, that will have you up till all hours, losing your sleep, job and girlfriend while you fight the jelly-like alien terrors from the... uh... well, deep. Let's hope a future version will include a data disk with free couple therapy.

R26 PD25

C **Z 92** Time Warner Interactive, £44.95

An addictive *Command & Conquer*-style game, based on occupation of zoned areas to control weapon-producing factories. As a result of this, it's more strategic than C&C, and lacks the exploration aspect. Network options, lots of entertaining cut-scenes and soldiers who feel free to criticise your efforts. And believe me, criticise you they will, because it really is very, very hard indeed.

R42 T46 PD43, 46

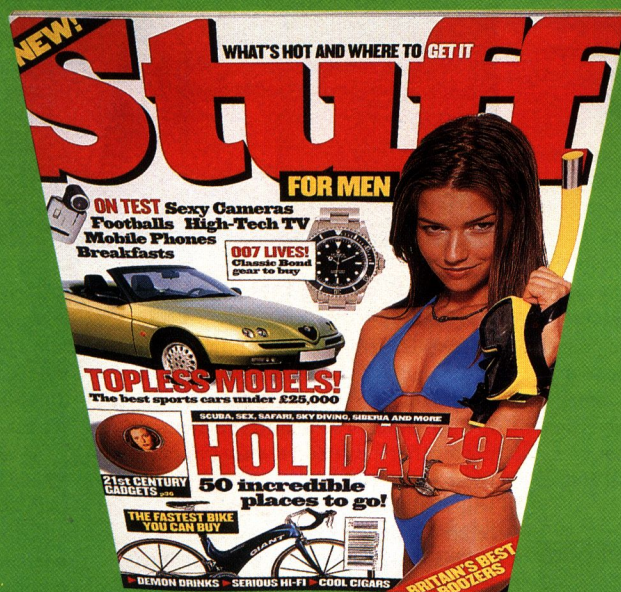


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[ON SALE 6 FEBRUARY]



PCs aren't really crap, *Tomb Raider* runs on a 486, *Syndicate Wars* is fantastic and no *Red Alert* demo.

(Right) You want *Quake*, you got it! Check out this month's cover CD...



MORE QUAKE STUFF

How about including a regular section on your cover CD for *Quake* stuff? There are some smart patches around, and every level I've tried has been good. Also, you could have a section like the Budget pages for *Quake* Total Conversions. *Ultimate Quake* is currently the best, but it's really a partial conversion.

Tom Francis, CompuServe

As luck would have it, this month's CD is absolutely chocker with new *Quake* levels and a few new useful utilities, including *Quake Soccer*. We ran a whole bunch of utilities and skins in issue 44 (November); if you missed it, you can order a copy through our Back Issues service (01789 490215).

LUVVERLY LARA

Lara is fit, Lara is fit, Lara is fit. Lara is too fit to be printed on such low quality paper. In future you should put all the pictures of Lara on high quality laminated paper. 'Ere's an ode to Lar...

Ode to Lara (a.k.a Natalie Cook)

Lara Lara
You Are Fit
Make My Life Happy
You Are Fit
Lara Lara

Toby, CompuServe

Glad to see that Lara's still breaking hearts into the new year. Rumour has it that she'll be appearing in a new line of cinema promos in the coming months, so get down to your local picture house and check it out. Failing that, Eidos have launched a poster campaign that will focus on men's toilets in pubs up and down the country - so now you'll have an excuse for peeing over your foot.

(Below) Sorry Toby, but as you think that the paper quality of *PC Zone* is too poor for pictures of the flesh and blood Lara Croft, here's the *real* heroine instead.



Letter of the month

PCS AREN'T CRAP, REALLY!

I've just read the 'looking back' section of your latest issue, and I noticed you used a shot of *Tomb Raider* when you're talking about PCs versus PlayStations. A mate came round recently and set up his PlayStation next to my P133. He used a tiny little 10inch TV, and I already had my screen size set to about 10inch, because that's the best size for hi-res mode on my PC. The speed is almost exactly the same, but the PlayStation was lower res. Of course, we could have rigged it up to a massive TV and the speed would have been the same and the resolution would have been shite. Equally, I could have got a massive monitor, put it on full screen and low-res and the effect would have been the same. My point is that the PC can handle higher resolutions than the PlayStation at the same speed (if you have a P133), so PCs are better than PlayStations. The games are cheaper, there are no classic games from the days when developers went for 'playability' in a game on the PlayStation (I bet *Cannon Fodder* is never released on it), the controls are more versatile on the PC (imagine *Mercenaries* with only a gamepad) and everyone either plays *Quake* with a mouse or a keyboard so *Quake* won't catch on on PlayStation. Okay, console users don't have to mess around with machine settings, but they can't piss about with 300 savegames like PC owners can (obviously figures such as 300 only apply to *C&C*); I mean, do you have any idea how annoying the 'St. Francis' Folly' level on *Tomb Raider* is when you can only save at certain points and you only have one slot to save in? How many savegames

have you used up, eh? I'm on number 276 and I'm on the 'Obelisk of Khamoon' - that's about the ninth level! Hopefully you see my point by now. I'm not arguing with you, by the way. I'm well aware that Chris Anderson was supporting PCs.

John Francis, CompuServe

Your point about savegames, while glaringly obvious, is one that I agree with. However, I was talking about the comparisons between the PC and PSX purely on an aesthetic level. You can't argue with the fact that, traditionally, console owners have been playing games that are far more impressive visually than their PC counterparts. The PSX, for example, has a dedicated graphics chip that can chuck around polygons in 16 million colours with consummate ease. It's only with the arrival of the new generation of 3D accelerator cards that we're seeing games that make the PSX look like a bag of shite. In reply to your comment about the PC being a better all-round games machine than the PSX, I will only say that a) I work for PC Zone and not a console magazine for a very good reason, and b) I spent the Xmas period playing *Red Alert* and *The Darkening* while my PlayStation sat in the corner gathering dust. Incidentally, most of our readers are playing games on low-end Pentiums or even 486s so for them particularly my arguments will ring true. Thanks for your comments. I hope you continue to enjoy the benefits of superior computer games courtesy of your trusty PC and recommend you check out the 3DFX version of *Tomb Raider* pronto.

Chris Anderson, Deputy Editor

TOMB RAIDER ON 486 SHOCK!

I'd just like to say that I totally agree with your 95% score for *Tomb Raider*! I've got a 486DX4/133 and it runs very nicely indeed. In fact I've played the demo on my brother's dx2/66 because I'm one of those people who say 'I wonder if this will work on...' - and it does, with relatively little jerko movement.

I also love Lara Croft! My god! She is the sexiest girl character in the whole of the games industry! Anyway, I'd like to say "Good work Core and Eidos Interactive!" and to let everyone who still owns a 486DX2/66 and above know that you can play the game!!!

Keith Hammond, CompuServe

There aren't many games that can run acceptably on a 486 at the moment, but that's just a sign of the times, I'm afraid. The engine developed by Core Design and used in *Tomb Raider* is very quick and efficient, so it's not surprising that it runs okay on a 486.

As more games are developed for Windows 95 and DirectX, however, it's looking more likely that we'll be seeing fewer games that will run acceptably on a 486. The realistic minimum spec for Windows 95 and games that run under it is effectively a Pentium 120 with 16Mb RAM, so make the most of it.

NO RED ALERT DEMO

I have a complaint. I loaded up the cover CD on the January issue and loaded up *Red Alert*. These are my



(Left) C&C: Red Alert: Stop whinging about full demos – just buy it!

(Right) Doubling the fun with Syndicate Wars.

(Far right) "I'm gonna get bloody ugly if there's no prize for finishing *The Dig...*"



thoughts from then on. I looked at the title Westwood and thought ace, finally a copy of *Red Alert*. Then I realised that it was in fact only a rolling demo and thought AAGHHH. OH NO!!!! So how come you couldn't put a full demo of it on the CD. EH, EH? Answer that one, EH?

Tobz, Lancaster

It's a pretty simple question to answer really. There wasn't a playable demo of *Red Alert* available when we were compiling the January CD and there won't be one for quite a while, because Westwood haven't written one yet. The rolling demo we ran on the January issue was just a teaser to give you an idea of what to expect. It did state quite clearly on the CD cover that it was a rolling demo. Don't hold your breath waiting for a demo to arrive either – the demo for C&C didn't turn up until around six months after the full game was released. Go and buy the full game. You should be able to pick it up for under 30 quid, and we guarantee that you won't be disappointed. Tight arse.

SYNDICATE WARS IS BRILLIANT

Hello there. On the October cover disc there was a demo of *Syndicate Wars*. I played it and, frankly, I hated it.

I thought that the graphics were Spectrum quality, the movement was slow and that the action was nonexistent. However, my uncle bought me the full game for my birthday. I was really pissed off. But then I played it... and it was amazing... absolutely amazing. Yes, the graphics aren't brilliant, but who cares??? The gameplay is phenomenal. I play it every day from 6-12pm and I love it. It's one of the best games ever made. The weapons are brilliant and the action is pumping all the time. However, I've had some of my friends round to show them the incredible quality of gameplay, and they all slagged it off!!!! They said it was slow, boring and tedious. They need to sit down and play it like I have before they can get a real feel for it. Personally, I think they were frightened by the mass killings and dead bodies, but what would you expect from saddo PlayStation owners, huh?

Anyway, there are a few questions I want to ask you:

1. I've been looking for a joystick splitter for ages so that I can have two players on a joypad but a salesman told me that they were all crap and didn't



hardly work. But I saw the brilliant Microsoft SideWinder gamepad and was wondering if the extra joystick port was reliable. Could you please tell me?

2. Can you only have a two-player game on 'xs' over modem or network or is there some sort of split-screen option? And anyway, is the game any good?

3. Is there a prize for completing *The Dig* because it's taken me absolutely ages?!! Surely I deserve a knighthood or something?

Frewball, CompuServe

PS. Keep up the good work!!!

Syndicate Wars is a truly fantastic game, but like so many good games, you have to actually sit down with it for a while before it reveals its true degree of excellence. Bullfrog games tend to be this way, but because they have such a rigorous play-testing regime, you'll find that most of them have a few surprises well into the game. When Charlie Brooker had it for review, he lost about a week of his life playing it. He just couldn't stop himself. No one agrees with you about the graphics – in hi-res mode it looks stunning, the light-sourcing is exceptional and the engine state of the art. You must have had a magic Spectrum.

As far as the Microsoft SideWinder Pro is concerned, we've had two running through one port, no problem. You'll only run into problems with games that aren't designed to run under Windows 95. Similarly, the Gravis GamePad Pro works just as well, and is actually a better pad. Check out the hardware pages in this issue for a full review.

And no, there isn't a split-screen mode on *Syndicate Wars*, it would just be too slow. The network version is pretty cool, however, so try and get yourself a game at one of the numerous cyber cafés popping up around the country – it's definitely worth a go.

Sadly, no prizes for completing *The Dig* (another game that gets better the more you play it), but give yourself a slap on the back from the guys at LucasArts.

ANUTTER WRITES...

As you may have noticed, not all of your letters are from the UK. This is one of those letters – I'm sending this from the planet Calamatori Beta VII, dead centre of the ZoneWorlds, a universe many light-millennia away from your own.

The only reason I even bother visiting this pitiful little planet called Earth is because it's the only place they sell *PC Zone* – ridiculous, isn't it? You can even get the latest copy of flipping *Bunty* out on Tirati III. (Not that I buy it, of course, I have a little sister...)

Anyway, while I was on about the complexities of the Omniverse, I remembered what I was going to write about. These people who seem to keep writing to WordProcessor, do they ACTUALLY READ THE MAGAZINE??? Every month there's some git asking whether *Doom* is a good game, whether *Quake* is better than *Duke3D* or why you had some advert in the last issue which (shock horror!) had a girl in it... When you've answered these questions three million times, don't you just get slightly annoyed? I suggest that the next time you get one of these questions you send them something back, preferably explosive. Or if they've written in via e-mail, send a virus back to them, compliments of the establishment.

That's enough chat from me, my phone bill's going to go through the roof. Calamatori Beta VII isn't exactly local, you know.

Inertia, The ZoneWorlds

PS. Charlie Brooker is seen as a deity of humour out here...

Basically, you write it and we'll print it (if it's remotely interesting). Please remember that some people who write in to the mag are new to the PC games scene and want to get a grasp of the basics. Similarly, not everyone appreciates that our core readership largely consists of males in their late twenties, so when they pick up the mag and see a semi-naked picture of Jo Guest they're just a bit surprised because they think computer games are for kids and that *PC Zone* is a kids' mag. It's not, it's for gamers who enjoy playing PC games. Even on other planets. Z

Write to PC Zone

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Send your e-mail to:

CompuServe: PC ZONE 100142, 2152
CIX: PCZONE@CIX.compulink.co.uk

Don't forget to check out the *PC Zone* CIX conference if you're on-line.

If your letter is selected as 'Letter of the Month' we'll send you a bundle of T-shirts and maybe even a game. COO!

NB: *PC Zone* retain the right to completely edit, re-write and change all correspondence in order to make them even more smug, funny and witty.

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*Women who
pay for it*

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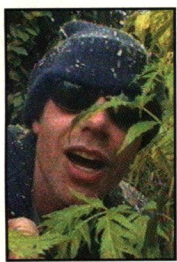
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Culky Says...

Culky's Guide To Buying Art...

(Below) "Don't buy this picture as the floor and the chair legs aren't straight, so you'll lose money."



(Above far right) "Reds look 'trick' and pricey, car looks real fast; a good painting (very valuable)."

(Right) "Browns look horrid and shitty... worthless piece of tack."

(Below) "This is a very good painting, the man is happy and both his eyes are looking at you. I would buy this picture."



DEAR ENGLAND, Alright? Colin here, isn't it. Well, me and my dad went to an art auction at Sotherby's last week and I could see in an instant what was going on. Nobody knew nothing about art. I've been painting since I was three and I'm now 32. That's 27 years' experience. So read on and you might learn a thing or two.

Linework

Many artists charge a lot of money for pictures of buildings which aren't even straight! (See diagram no.1.) No decent artist would be too lazy to get their ruler out to make sure the lines that make up the sides of the houses or flats they're drawing are *straight*. A ruler only costs 20p! So don't buy stuff that's not straight.

Buildings and houses aren't the only places where

the ruler hasn't come out either. I saw a painting in a gallery of a room with a chair in it that was being knocked out for £150,000. I checked the angle of the chair legs with my protractor, they weren't even square! I tried to get them to reduce the price to £9.99 as the legs weren't straight. But the bloke in the gallery said: "If sir was to look at the bottom right-hand corner of the painting, sir would find a signature, *one* may perhaps notice from that signature that this is an original work by Matisse,

this, sir, a famous piece, from a very fine and well celebrated Impressionist artist indeed. The legs, sir, aren't *supposed* to be straight, that's the whole principle behind the Impressionist philosophy, namely that the world is seen and perceived as if through the eyes of the artist."

I told him I could see fine through my own eyes,

and that I didn't want to create an impression. I was just pointing out to him that the chair wasn't straight, that was all.

A bargain

He then took me aside to a quite corner of the gallery, and suggested to me that I might be in the wrong place, and that perhaps I would find precisely what I'm looking for on the Kilburn High Road market, maybe on a Saturday morning, perchance.

He added that I may be fortunate enough to find a painting of a cat that looks just like a *real* cat.

Smart! I thought...

at last we're communicating, he wasn't as stupid as I first thought. He knew exactly what I was looking for, pictures of nice animals, you know, hamsters and dogs and that. No wonder he had such a clever job in a flash suit. He wasted no time

in showing me where Kilburn market

is on his A to Z, he even held the door open for me when I went out.

As I was leaving I asked if I could take a card from the gallery with their address and telephone number on it, but he told me that I'd probably never need it, and that they were

low on stock of

gallery cards at the moment as everybody had been asking for them, so I left it. And because he was so polite and so posh to me, would you believe it, I didn't even have to get the old chin-pistons out.

But let that be a second lesson for you. If you don't see what you want at the first art gallery you come to, then try the local market.

Faces

A lot of painters do pictures of people with their faces at a funny sideways angle to you, that makes them look very

rude, and you can't see the other side of their faces. It's much better to draw them looking towards you (see diagram no. 2), because then you can see their whole face with both of their eyes looking at you. They then appear to you how they would if you were to meet them in a pub etc... as you look at your painting you could imagine in your mind that you're chatting to them or buying them a drink perhaps. I know it's rude to stare, but remember they

are actually in the painting, so they won't know that you're staring at them.

Colours

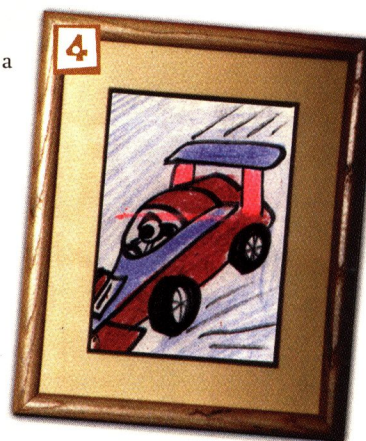
There are two more important things to watch out for when trying to start your own art collection, *one* is the colours they use and the *last* thing is the frame (that's the bit that goes round the edge).

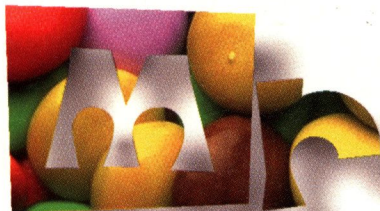
Colours must be bright and flashy.

Too many painters use browns and greys. Only buy art that's got a lot of blue and a lot of red in it... this makes it look 'trick' and expensive. Don't buy stuff with brown in it. Brown makes paintings look like they're old-fashioned. Compare the two paintings (see diagrams 3 and 4) and see which one looks more pricey. Reds really look good. Tony Hart, a famous artist, always uses a 'reddy' colour in his TV shows. Ferrari always paint their cars red.

Frame

The last and final detail is the frame. To make your art collection durable and strong, build a good solid frame round it. The stronger, the better. Lots of very old and expensive paintings have huge solid frames round them, but most will make do with wood. Metal or carbon fibre is stronger (I once made a frame out of old scaffold poles and coated them in zinc alloy primer). You can save money here too. Don't frame each picture individually, wait till you've got a few, nail them together, then build a frame round the lot. It's much stronger. Coat it in anti-rust primer and it'll last longer than any painting... guaranteed. **Z**

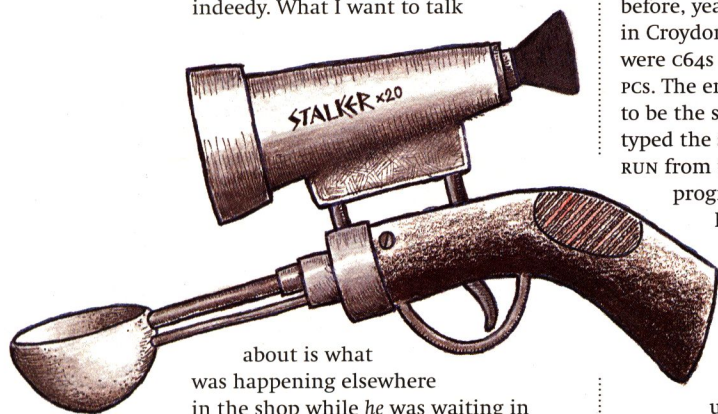




(Right) The AVENGER potato peeler, with handy brass 'finger guard'.

(Below) The PUNISHER 9mm ice cream scoop, plus STALKER telescopic night-sight.

A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO I WAS IN an electrical hardware shop in Brighton... Dixons, I think, not that it really matters. I was there because the chum I was with was trying to flog his old HP LaserJet printer. (For some reason he believed that such high street chainstores would be crying out for shonky second-hand equipment. I'd told him a million times they wouldn't, but he refused to listen.) But that's not what this tale is about. No, indeed. What I want to talk



about is what was happening elsewhere in the shop while he was waiting in the queue. And what was happening was this:

A long bank of PCs, about 20 of them, were arranged in such a way that they were clearly meant to be saying, 'Hey, you, come and try us.' Yeah, that's exciting, I thought... like 'come and have a go at clicking icons on Windows 95.' Scintillating. Still, one man's meat and all that, eh, because sure enough, down the far end, there was the punter from Hell. It was a woman, with her kid in tow. I tuned into their conversation (as you do), and it soon became apparent that the kid (age about 12) was to be getting a PC for his birthday. The budget for this gift, it seemed, was virtually limitless (spoilt brat). However, the brilliant thing was that while the kid knew EXACTLY what he was talking about, his mum wasn't listening. She was trying to 'pretend' to her son (and herself) that, as an adult, she knew best. You know? Oh, and she was wearing a fur coat by the way: a mere detail perhaps, but one worth mentioning so you'll hate her as much as I did. So anyway, there she was, tapping pompously on keyboards and being generally obnoxious. Excellent.

He's afraid of... potato peelers

The plan...

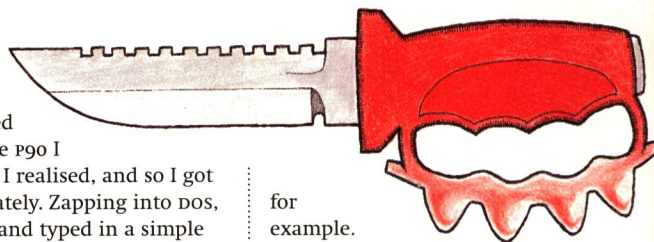
It'd be about three minutes before she worked her way up to the P90 I was standing by, I realised, and so I got to work immediately. Zapping into DOS, I loaded QBASIC, and typed in a simple program. I'd done the same thing before, years ago, in a similar situation in Croydon, although the computers were C64s and ZX Spectrums rather than PCs. The end result was hopefully going to be the same, though, so, having typed the sixth and final line, I selected RUN from the menu bar. And the program ran.

Perfect timing... the annoying fur coat woman arrived precisely eight seconds later, her boy still explaining that he wanted a Dan P200 with 64MB RAM. Brushing him aside for the umpteenth time, she tapped at the P90's keyboard, setting off an 'INKEY\$' command. Up on the monitor popped a simple but effective message: 'Fuck off you old slag.' She took her finger off the key. The message disappeared. She pressed it again. 'Fuck off you old slag.' And again. And again. Her son was delighted. I was delighted, too. She went purple and swanned off in a swirl of mink to collect the manager, leaving me just enough time to return the machine to real dos and type C:\...

"I'm telling you, it swore at me," she said, tapping furiously and spelling out the word 'vvvvvvvhhhhhhh'.

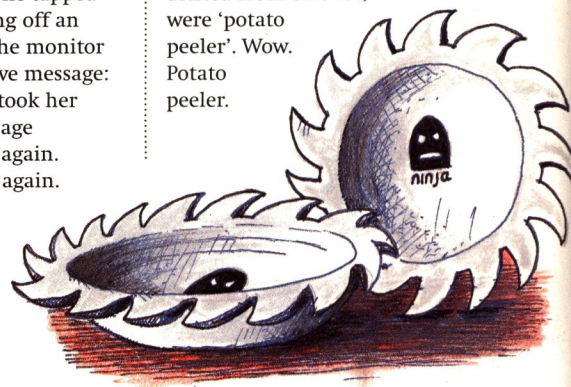
"Hmmm," said the manager, who only half believed her (the other half of him was thinking that maybe she was a well-to-do alcoholic/schizophrenic).

Feeling somewhat thwarted, but not knowing how or why, fur coat woman changed tack: she began to rant and rave at the manager on tangents, covering several topics as she progressed. 'Computers' and 'Evil' were words used in one sentence,



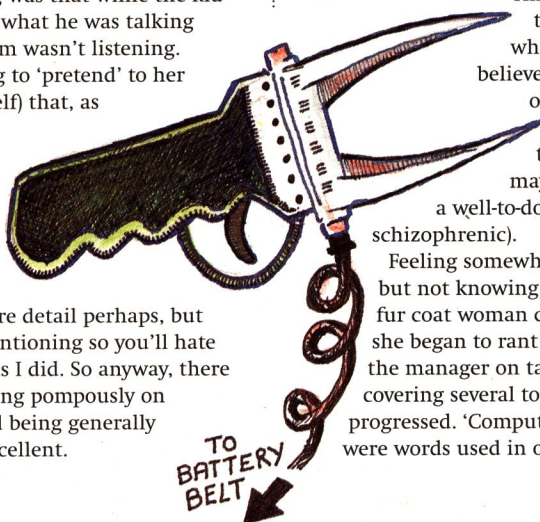
for example. Then she switched to Dunblane and guns. The manager was nodding, but wasn't really listening. Then she said something about dun dun bullets, meaning, I suppose, dum dum bullets. Then she switched to knives, launching into a tirade about how all knives should be banned, not just some of them. It was at this point that my chum reappeared...

"They don't want it," he said, disgruntled, talking about his dodgy HP LaserJet printer. I told him that I'd told him so, and he concurred. As we left the shop I could still hear fur coat woman; whose very last words, as we drifted from earshot, were 'potato peeler'. Wow. Potato peeler.



Grey areas of the law...

So now I'm writing this, a couple of weeks down the line - yet I can still hear fur coat woman's parting words as clear as day: potato peeler. Superb! I assume she was still on the 'ban all knives' stance, but can only guess as to whether she was suggesting that even potato peelers should be banned, or, alternatively, that potato peelers should be allowed. Personally I'm all for allowing them. And I'm also all for using grey areas of the law to kind of 'slip things through the net'. To this end I've set up a mail order company, which I'm calling Slayer Kitchenware. Send an SAE to the usual Dennis Publishing address for the full Slayer Kitchenware brochure, but for now, just to whet your appetite, here are four of the items on offer... **Z**



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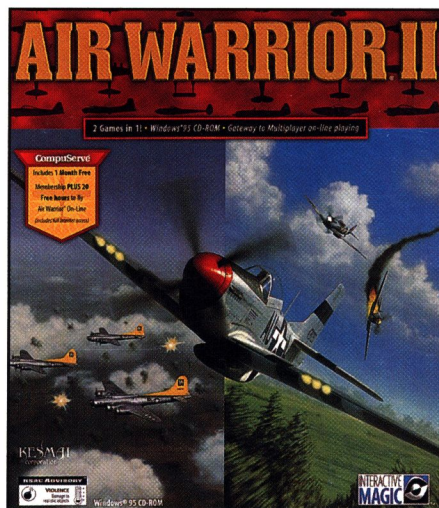
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